

My intervention on the NHS Strikes Debate

NHS Strikes – Volume 727: debated on Monday 6 February 2023

Will Quince

I remember another Scottish National party Member making a similar comment in a previous urgent question, crowing about how Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister of Scotland, was directly negotiating with the unions and that they had paused their industrial action, but only a handful of weeks later that industrial action was renewed. Pay is of course a devolved matter for Scotland and for Wales.

I will not make unfunded promises or pledges from this Dispatch Box. I want to have an honest and open dialogue with the unions about what is affordable for the NHS, where we recognise and reward NHS staff—who do the most incredible job day in, day out—with one eye to recruitment and retention, but it also has to be fair to taxpayers; and that is the spirit in which I approach this matter.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con) Can senior managers of NHS England and its various trusts make more use of pay gradings, job evaluations, promotions and increments, using pay flexibilities so that staff who are doing a good job feel valued and can be paid more?

Will Quince:

That certainly is an option. My right hon. Friend talks about NHS managers. Understandably, the Opposition focus on nurses and paramedics, but let us not forget exactly who we are talking about: the entire Agenda for Change workforce, which is 1.245 million people. That is exactly why every 1% equates to £700 million. My right hon. Friend is right that pay is a factor, but it is not the only factor, which is why we also focus on working conditions and environment.