

**From the Permanent Secretary
and HSC Chief Executive**



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Dear Ms Wylie

Thank you for your letter of the 17th December, regarding pay for local health and social care workers.

Throughout the year, the Department of Health has worked extensively in partnership with trade unions to make progress in pay talks, however, there are significant constraints in terms of affordability and the inability in the absence of ministers to achieve pay parity with other regions.

The concerns and frustrations of Health Care Workers are understandable, however continued industrial action can only exacerbate an already difficult situation.

Whilst agreement on a pay deal has not yet been reached, the Department of Health remains committed to engagement with trade unions to find a way forward on pay and related matters. The Department's last financial offer, which would add £79m (approx. 3.2%) to the overall pay bill, remains the maximum which I am able to offer within both the budget and the authority available to me.

The decision to depart from pay parity was taken by minister and, given that fact and the longer term implication of it, consideration of restoration of that position is similarly an issue for Ministers.

In the meantime, Health and Social Care Trusts have developed contingency plans to seek to minimise the disruption to the wider public. As employers, each Trust will continue to work with trade unions locally, to agree protection of vital services.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Pengelly', written in a cursive style.

RICHARD PENGELLY