Edinburgh

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2020;371:m4700<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m4700>

Published: 01 December 2020

NHS and social care staff in Scotland get bonus for work during pandemic

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A £500 (€557; \$667) bonus is to be paid to all full time NHS staff and social care workers in Scotland in recognition of their “extraordinary service” during the coronavirus pandemic.

The special payment was announced by Scotland’s first minister Nicola Sturgeon who said it was “a demonstration of what we collectively owe you, and a heartfelt thank you for the sacrifices you have made.”

More than 300 000 staff will benefit from the payment including nurses, porters, doctors, primary care staff, care home workers, hospice staff, and residential childcare staff. Those who work part time will receive a proportionate share of the £500 payment.

It will cost the Scottish government £180m and will be paid out of the special budget created for covid-19 support measures. Sturgeon said it will be separate from any negotiations about pay for the longer term. “There are no strings attached.”

The payment was welcomed by doctors’ leaders in Scotland. Lewis Morrison, chair of BMA Scotland, said, “This has been an exceptionally tough year for doctors across Scotland, so a tangible recognition for them and other health and care colleagues, and the fundamental value we should place in the NHS, is to be welcomed. We hope this isn’t just a one-off but signals the start of a process which will build on this.”

The associate director of the Royal College of Nursing Scotland, Norman Provan, said that what is really needed is “a pay deal that truly values the skills, clinical expertise, and contribution of nursing staff—not just during the pandemic, but day in, day out, year after year.”

The announcement was made by Sturgeon at the Scottish National Party’s virtual conference at which she contrasted her government’s handling of the pandemic with that of the Westminster government. She also urged Prime Minister Boris Johnson not to tax the payment.

There were further announcements of a £100m fund to help poorer families over the winter including a £100 one-off payment to families whose children get free school meals, plus new spending on apprenticeships.

The Scottish Conservatives said all the measures were being funded out of money provided by the UK government.