

SoR Ballot Q&As

As you know, the SoR is undertaking a consultative ballot on the proposed revised agreement for NHS pension provision. This is not a statutory ballot and, therefore, we can include all groups to express a view. The Questions and Answers below are designed to answer routine and known questions that members may have about this ballot. We will update this site with new questions and answers as they arise. It is important that members realise that this is not a strike ballot but the result will determine if we continue with the strike. The turnout for this ballot is important and to ensure that further action has sufficient support, every member should vote.

1. Why a consultative ballot – have we not already balloted?

- a. The first ballot was for industrial action and this took place on 30 November 2011. After the day of action the Government called all the unions from each of the sectors together to see if further progress could be made. Each sector then went into sector specific talks about changes to the proposals. What you have now is a document that defines some of the specific areas of contention. The consultative ballot is to establish if the detail contained in the 'draft proposed agreement' is sufficient for you to decide that this is the best that can be achieved or, if you do not agree, reaffirm your commitment to participate in further strike action.

2. What happened to the strike ballot last year?

- a. The action was suspended pending further discussions. The SoR may decide, subject to the result of the consultative ballot, to resume strike action or ballot for further strike action.

3. Why ballot everybody for strike action when we only balloted specific groups for the strike?

- a. A consultative ballot is not a statutory ballot. This allows us to determine who we want to ballot and not who the law will allow us to ballot. For the purposes of this ballot, all those who can be affected by the changes will be entitled to ballot.

4. Who will be called to take action if the proposals are rejected?

- a. We will call on all those who participated in the ballot in November last year to take strike action. This means that we will exclude students and members in the education sector. The former are not employed and, therefore, cannot be included in the strike. The latter must rely on the relevant union that is recognised by HEI or university to call for strike action as the SoR is not recognised for the purposes of collective bargaining by the Department of Education.

5. Why do the proposals only apply to England and Wales?

- a. The scheme only applies to members in England and Wales. However, we understand that Scotland and Northern Ireland have agreed to accept these changes. There are discussions in Scotland that may result in a different set of arrangements for Scottish members, but at the time of writing there is no agreement to vary the terms as they apply in England and Wales.

6. What will the Government do if the revised agreement is rejected?

- a. The Government has already declared its position on this matter. If the unions in any sector or across the public service reject the proposals it reserves the right to implement change, including changes that could be more draconian and worse than are proposed.

7. What if the SoR is the only health union to reject the offer?

- a. The SoR has already stated that if we are the only union in health to reject the revised proposals and the outcome is sufficient to call members for industrial action, then we will discuss collective action with other unions across the public service.

8. When will we be expected to take action?

- a. This is not yet clear and will depend on the results of the consultative ballot of members. Every effort will be made to coordinate action with other unions in health and with other public sectors who have opposed the changes. As each union in each of the sectors is working to varying

timetables, it is unlikely that we will see coordinated action until May at the earliest.

9. What if members accept the changes?

- a. Then we will simply inform the DH that our strike action is deemed at an end and let the changes occur.

10. Are other unions taking action?

- a. Unions in health are currently consulting by way of a formal ballot; others have already consulted.

11. Why are some sectors of UNITE and PCS and the NUT intending to take strike action now?

- a. These unions take the view that they could see no merit in further talks on the changes that the Government intend to introduce. They have, therefore, consulted early and, hence they will be in a position to take action by the end of March. We understand that they are now awaiting the result of all the sectors before taking action.

12. What is the minimum response required from members before industrial action can resume?

- a. It is expected that as the proposals have not been altered substantially, members will want to reaffirm their commitment to opposing change. We would, therefore, hope to achieve a result that exceeds the response we achieved in the strike ballot in November last year.

13. How will the SOR confirm the result of the ballot?

- a. The SoR will take the result on the Monday of the 2012 Annual Delegates Conference and UK Council will ask the conference to acknowledge and enact the result. The action that UK Council will ask the conference to confirm will depend on the result.

Questions related to the conduct of the ballot

1. What if I do not receive a ballot paper?

Call the SoR to check if you have been included.

2. As this is not a statutory ballot can I ask for another ballot paper to be sent if I lost the original?

Yes – again please call the SoR.

3. When is the final date for the receipt of ballot papers?

The final date to inform us of non receipt of a ballot paper is 12 noon on 11 April.