



**PAY CLAIM FOR 2021/22**  
**SUBMITTED BY UNISON, GMB and RCN TO Four Seasons Healthcare**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

This pay claim is submitted by the three recognised trade unions on behalf of staff working for Four Seasons Healthcare. The claim is set at a level that we believe recognises the following key points:

- The incredible work that employees of Four Seasons continue to do, particularly amid the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Working towards parity of pay with jobs of equivalent level of knowledge, skills and responsibilities in other health and care services
- Appropriate reward needed to recruit and sustain the morale and productivity of staff in their crucial role of delivering care for the elderly and vulnerable.
- Appropriate reward needed to recognise the level of responsibilities, skill, increased workload and stress placed on staff.
- Some Four Seasons Healthcare are not being paid for all the hours they work and there is significant frustration that additional burden of working unsocial hours is not recognised in pay.

**2. SUMMARY OF CLAIM**

We are seeking:

- A substantial % pay rise on all pay points that reflects the skills and responsibilities, hard work, dedication and compensation for staff putting their lives and families at risk. That should be comparable with that of NHS colleagues.
- The introduction of an occupational sick pay scheme for all staff, irrespective of the cause of ill health absence. Develop a robust policy with the trade unions to support staff attendance at work.
- The introduction of enhancements for unsociable working hours, particularly night shifts and all bank holidays, and a standard enhanced rate for all overtime worked.
- The reimbursement of the cost of registration fees for care assistants and registered nurses
- Registered nurses should be paid a minimum of £17/hour. Further, significantly narrow the pay gap between nursing assistants and registered nurses.
- Details of a plan to ensure short staffing levels are addressed in the coming year. The joint unions stand ready to work with Four Seasons on this.
- We request that Four Seasons signs up to the TUC Menopause campaign the page. More information can be found here: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/menopause-work>

### 3. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PRESSURES AND SHORT STAFFING

We know that vacancy rate in the residential care sector is a significant problem. Skills for Care (2020) recently stated that the vacancy rate in social care in England was 7.3% and 12.3% in nursing in 2019/20, equating to an estimated 112,000 vacancies at any one time. This figure has come down slightly during the pandemic but it remains a significant factor that Four Seasons should include when considering pay rates and other terms and conditions. The joint unions have requested company specific figures from Four Seasons and we await these with interest.

RCN responses to consultation point to two significant factors affecting recruitment and retention:

- 16% of registered nurse responses at Four Seasons are on less than £16/hr
- There is a huge and inexplicable pay gap between nursing assistants and RNs

We note that, in response to the unions' consultation members commented on critical staffing levels, with staff feeling pressured to come into work even when feeling unwell, having to work extra shifts or cover double the workload. Below are a selection of Four Seasons staff comments:

#### **GMB, UNISON and RCN member comments on short staffing levels causing additional work and stress**

*"Working with very challenging clients, critical shortages of staff are putting residents at risk""Only get minimum wage should get more it's very hard heavy work sometimes don't even get a break when short staffed, should be payed as cook when cooking but not"*

*"I sometimes unpaid as clock in early but short staffed so will help without pay"*

*"Due to covid we work over 3 floors with 5 staff, 90% of the floors are doubles"*

*"To be fair, the workload is too much and the remuneration does not meet up."*

*"Nurses deserves a more higher rate most especially in these situation. Understaffing is also an issue as well that needs attention."*

*"There is not enough permanent Registered nursing staff , meaning the workload is too much. Sick pays are paid at the statutory sick pay which is rubbish."*

*"Registered Nurse recruitment and retention is an issue, would benefit from salary or hourly rate increments to appeal to nurses with extra skills experience also this should be offered to Care Staff."*

#### **The impact of limiting staff movement**

Challenges in respect to recruitment and retention are likely to grow as a result of government policy in relation to staff movement between care homes. This is likely to mean many staff having to directly choose between their multiple employers in order to work in a single location over the coming months. Four Seasons will want to be an employer of choice for staff, and pay is likely to be a *critical factor*.

One Four Seasons staff member made the following comment on this issue:

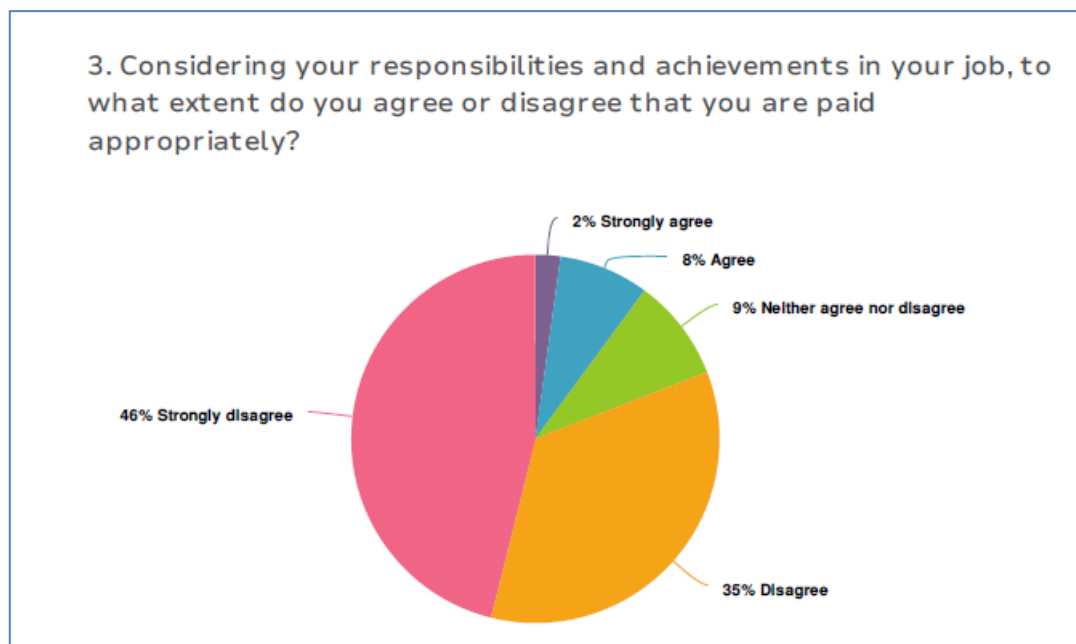
*“Currently four seasons are making staff sign disclaimers that they will only work for four seasons care homes and have no other job. Some staff rely upon their second incomes as Four Seasons pay is not great and by holding us to ransom like this makes our pay situation worse as they will not pay me my agency rate that I would normally get.”*

#### 4. MORALE AND STAFF VIEWS ON PAY

Four Seasons has prided itself on being an employer of choice in the social care sector. Responses to the union surveys suggest growing frustration over the under-valuing of staff. This risks undermining the morale of the workforce and may feed the recruitment and retention issues set out above.

Among RCN members, 70% respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were paid appropriately for their responsibilities. Many cited lack of fairness, equivalence with their colleagues, with those in other companies and the NHS. For GMB members that figure rose to 82%. For UNISON members it was 81%. These are stark results which reflect a hardening view among the workforce that their pay does not reflect the skills and responsibilities of their roles.

**UNISON responses to the question: “Considering your responsibilities and achievements in your job, to what extent do you agree or disagree that you are paid appropriately?”**



To give a more detailed picture of the views expressed on pay levels, the quotes below come from members of all three unions:

### **GMB, UNISON and RCN member comments on pay and how it relates to job roles**

“The management higher up should stop paying lip service to care staff and recognise that we are a very important cog in the care works and stop trying to get care on the cheap. . . I hold qualifications in care which I don’t get paid extra for and are not recognised.”

“Care assistants do all personal care, moving and handling. which can affect their wellbeing. As well as assisting residents in their final hours which can be very emotional. Care assistant know their residents and can inform nurses etc. if the residents health and wellbeing changed. We go above and beyond for our residents. We deserve to be paid better for our dedication and care we give to each and every resident sometimes feeling physically emotional and mentally drained.”

“Pay is set at 1p per hour above the living wage. Over worked, not valued or respected. No reward for working extra hours or extra duties”

“All I want is for us on the English side to be treat the same as the Scottish side give us a living wage and even just a pond extra if we do over time.”

“I’m payed £8.20 an hour for a job that is so demanding physically and emotionally. It's not fair.”

“Considering that we look after people who are most at the risk we don't get enough appreciation or pay for responsibilities we carry Some of us cannot afford to call in sick because of finance yet Four Seasons don’t cover sick pay days.”

“No extra for overtime , no extra holidays for overtime hours , and unpaid breaks. Less pay more work, need more pay to match the workload.”

“Very much underpaid for this type of work. It is a very tiring and often stressful job.”

“Only get minimum wage should get more it's very hard heavy work.”

“No work life balance. We turned to a coronavirus ward and given a keyring by Four Seasons as a thank you. Looking to leave asap.”

“We all feel our pay is very poor.”

*“Other companies already pay more for the same job description”*

*Pay seems arbitrary “dependent on who you are friends with”*

### **5. SICK PAY**

It is noteworthy that the unions did not ask specific questions about sick pay, but in comments returned on more general questions, this came out very strongly as an issue for staff. We recognise that Four Seasons is using the Infection Control Fund to pay those self-isolating following a positive

test for the virus. But there is clearly a large amount of resentment that a more generous sick pay scheme is not in place for other absence due to ill health.

There is both a moral and a practical case for introducing a drastically improved sick pay scheme for all staff, irrespective of the cause of ill health absence.

Even leaving aside the circumstances of the pandemic, how can it be right that staff who are ill, through no fault of their own, should be financially penalised? Being ill is not a personal fault or weakness. It is a misfortune that every person has to occasionally contend with. All employers should recognise this and put in place a sick pay scheme which maintains full income for a reasonable amount of time.

More practically, staff working long hours just to make ends meet, are complaining of being exhausted making them more prone to infection and ill health and mental ill health. Those staff who are ill and may be infectious (with conditions including, but not limited to Covid-19) or have conditions that present a risk to their own, colleagues and residents health and safety. They should not feel pressurised financially to come into work. This may encourage infections to spread among elderly and vulnerable people receiving care in a care home

Both these practical and moral elements can be seen in staff responses to the union consultations below:

**GMB, UNISON and RCN member comments on sick pay**

“If work weekend nights extra should get extra pay!! Should get full pay when sick extra like hospitals etc. we are doing sane job and maybe more work and get no thanks.”

“We all deserve a better pay and sick pay.”

“No extra pay for overtime paid flat rate and paid the same rate as day staff or nights, no sick pay if your ill or in hospital, should be paid at inflation rate as it is a terrible wage for the work we do.

Sick pay is not enough to live on, wages are too low for the job we do.”

“I feel like we should be paid better for what we do as a job. Then I feel like if you work nights you should be paid more at present we get paid same rate as day work. And I believe sick pay should be more especially during this difficult time.”

“Better sick pay, better break facilities and better pay rate.”

More paid holidays, training and improved sick pay.”

We only get SSP after being off for 4 days. We on the minimum wage & I feel we should be on a higher rate of pay. Training is important with chemicals so I think there should be more. Often not able to be off sick due to SSP,

Keeping in line will help stop stress over finances, SSP shouldn't be little because your ill.

## 6. BREAKS, OVERTIME AND UNSOCIAL HOURS

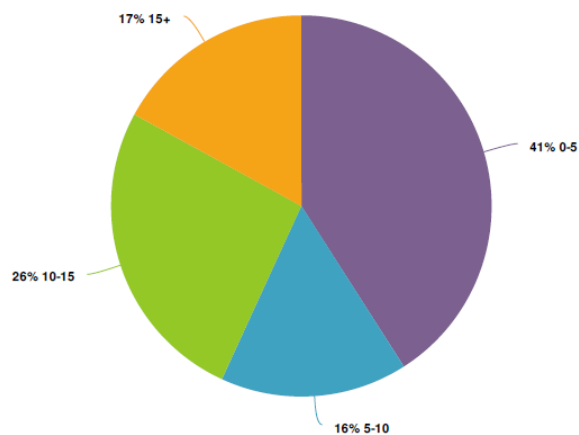
Staff tell us that unpaid overtime is usually accrued through shifts without sufficient overlap to allow for a handover. And most respondents to the consultation pointed out that they were usually too busy to have a break, or it meant “staying an hour over their shift time to complete all their tasks”. For the few that managed to take a break it was often interrupted due to resident’s needs.

Responsees to the consultation also made clear that they would like to see the introduction of enhancements for unsociable working hours, particularly night shifts and all bank holidays, and a standard enhanced rate for all overtime worked.

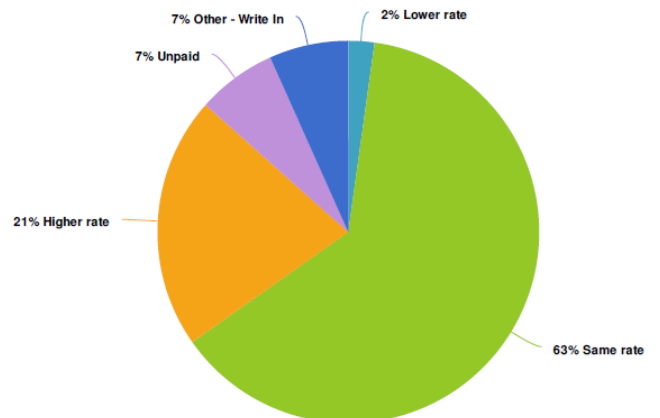
For RCN members, almost all (95%) respondents worked over their contracted hours. 50 % of respondents worked at least 1 shift (11 hours) or more a week, with 22% working over 16 hours. 43% said overtime was paid at a higher rate, but rates varied considerably, 32% were paid at the same rate and 20% was unpaid or at a lower rate.

### UNISON responses on extra hours and how it is paid

How many extra hours do you usually work per week?  
(above your contracted hours)



How are your extra hours paid?



### GMB, UNISON and RCN member comments on overtime and unsocial hours

*“No extra pay for overtime paid flat rate and paid the same rate as day staff for nights, no sick pay if your ill or in hospital, should be paid at inflation rate as it is a terrible wage for the work we do.”*

*“No extra for overtime , no extra holidays for overtime hours , and unpaid breaks £17.25 per hour at the moment. Employer does not want to pay us time and half for any overtime, so we still get £17.25 for any overtime. Due to increase in Covid cases, employer has stopped us from doing second jobs which makes it difficult for us as we already not earning enough on the one job.”*

*“Enhanced pay rate for overtime hours . Overtime hours means, excess hours on your contracted hours.”*

*"I'm a bank staff member however work 33-44 hours every week, night shift and pick up overtime where possible. I get paid £8, less than the regular staff and no night compensation."*

*"No incentive to work overtime did not feel supported by Four Seasons during covid crisis."*

*"Nights to have higher rate than days. All unsocial hours to have a higher rate."*

*"We do not get paid shift allowance for 12 hrs nightshift in this day and age it is shocking we don't get paid enough as an hourly rate but no unsocial hrs and weekend rate is shocking."*

## 7. INFLATION

It also important for consideration of pay to take into account the increase in the cost of living and the impact that has on the real terms value of wages. The most widely reported measure of inflation in the UK is the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). However, the most accurate indicator of changes in the cost of living facing workers is the Retail Prices Index (RPI). Inflation rose markedly over 2016 and 2017, pushing the RPI rate to over 4%. During 2018 and into 2019, rates have generally fallen back and the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy has been a further decline - RPI moved to 1.3% and CPI to 0.7% in October 2020.

Current inflation rates can mask longer term changes in the cost of living that have taken place since 2009 The examples below show major increases in core costs that have surpassed average prices increases over the period.

Expenditure item	House prices	Bus & coach fares	Electricity	Rail fares
Price rise 2010 -19	36%	54%	59%	36%

### Forecast inflation rates

The Treasury average of independent forecasts states that RPI inflation will average 1.5% over 2020. It will then escalate to 2.3% in 2021 and then run at in excess of 3% for the following three years, in line with the pattern shown in the graph below. These annual rates show the rate at which pay rises would be needed for wages just to maintain their current value.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The last year has seen intensified pressures placed on staff against the unprecedented background of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Staff have had to adapt to new ways of working during the pandemic, placing significantly increased stresses on them. Many staff have also faced the pressure of juggling their workload with extra demands in their private life, particularly where they have been caring for children or elderly relatives.

Nonetheless, the dedication of staff over the pandemic has enabled Four Seasons to maintain and adapt its services throughout this unprecedented period.

We think it is reasonable to ask Four Seasons to respond to requests for improvements in the areas of pay, reward and working conditions that staff wish to see addressed.

Therefore, this pay claim represents a very reasonable estimate of the reward staff deserve for their dedication, skill and hard work and the minimum improvement in pay needed to maintain workforce morale for delivering consistently high-quality care services.