**Introduction**

The NHS mileage scheme is available to our members in the UK on Agenda for Change contracts and those with Agenda for Change mileage allowances built into their contracts and the reimbursement rates are viewable in Section 17 and Annex 12 of the handbook. There are slight differences in the arrangements and rates in Wales and you can view them [here](http://www.wales.nhs.uk/documents/NHSWalesSection17.pdf).

The war in Ukraine and the increase in oil prices has meant we are now seeing record highs of the average price of petrol and diesel, which have recently hit 170.35p and 181.35p respectively. When you add in inflation and the increases in servicing and maintaining cars as well as rises in insurances costs. This means our members are having to dig deeper into their own pockets just to be able to go to work. This is having the largest impact on our members working in the community.

The NHS Mileage allowance has been paid at the same rates since 2014 and despite the rise in living costs there has been no increase in the 8 years since. So, the NHS staff council has been looking into what options are available to support staff struggling to cope with the impact the rising costs of fuel are having on them. Unfortunately, they have been unable to reach a UK wide agreement and the government has made it clear that there is no additional funding available.

Following local negotiations there has been a temporary increase of 5 pence to the mileage rates of the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales and we will need to increase the pressure on the UK Government, working with our colleagues across the other NHS unions to do the same in England and Northern Ireland.

**What can be done?**

Whilst we continue to work collaboratively with the other unions on the staff council nationally. What can we do more locally to improve things for our members that are struggling with the spiralling costs of using their own (or leased) vehicles?

There are several possible temporary solutions that our activists on JNCC’s and in local discussions could be arguing for, and they include:

* Increasing the reimbursement rates, you may have to look at potential tax liabilities if increasing the HMRC reimbursement rates too.
* Increasing the 3500 miles threshold or increasing the lower 20p rate for miles over 3500 or increasing all rates.
* Look at other options for our members like, receipting fuel, providing fuel cards or public transport travel passes, providing hire cars, investing in pool cars for community teams, paying travel expenses weekly rather than monthly and advancing mileage expenses rather than paying in arrears.

There are of course cost and other implications, for example, impacts on neighbouring trusts that will need to be considered, and there will need to be decisions on timescales. The additional rate increases in Scotland and Wales both have temporary timescales with options to review and extend, so there will need to be clear start, end and review dates and decisions made on when to start or backdate from. HR Directors have been sent a travel cost ready reckoner to help inform local discussions so our activists can start pressing to get mileage rates on the agenda as soon as possible. Members and activists should also be encouraged to lobby and write to their local MP’s. Personal stories about how the rising costs of just getting to and doing their jobs are impacting their finances and the lives of them and their families can help put pressure on the government.

**Forward Look**

In the week that the UK Government suddenly found (24 hours after the Sue Gray report) £10bn to help with the rising costs of utilities, and if they are serious about a more environmentally friendly future they need to find further money and seriously invest in greener initiatives moving forward like better public transport links or looking at the potential of pools of electric cars for our community teams with better access to charging points in their communities and workplaces.

We, along with the other NHS Trade Unions have formally requested that the NHS Staff Council undertake a review of the current travel and motoring cost reimbursement mechanism as set out in the NHS Terms and Conditions handbook. The Staff Council has agreed the need to review and will be writing to the Department of Health and Social Care to undertake that review. We will update you with what the review looks like when it happens.