

News

Critics round on 'insulting' public sector pay cap vote

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By Annie Makoff

MPs shoot down bid to end cap, after speculation government's position on the issue was changing

MPs last night rejected a bid to scrap the public sector pay cap by 323 votes to 309, after the Democratic Unionist Party sided with the Conservatives.

Yesterday's House of Commons vote – a Queen's Speech amendment tabled by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn – on the 1 per cent pay rise for public sector workers followed heightened calls to end cuts to the police and fire service in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire and the recent terrorist attacks in London and Manchester.

Unison general secretary Dave Prentis said the proposal's rejection was an "insult to paramedics, nurses, teaching assistants, care staff and all public sector workers. Ministers have spent the last few months praising public sector workers. This vote was their chance to show they really mean it. But the message is clear – the government doesn't value them enough to give them a wage rise."

Janet Davies, chief executive and general secretary at the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), described the Commons vote as a "bitter disappointment" for nurses and other public sector workers. The RCN is currently organising a 'summer of protests' campaign, taking place in 30 locations across the UK.

The government's position on the contentious issue came under scrutiny throughout the day, after a senior Conservative source hinted to the media that the pay cap would be reviewed during the next budget.

According to the *Guardian*, the source reported that transport secretary Chris Grayling and defence secretary Michael Fallon had discussed a "possible re-examination" of the pay cap. But just hours later, Downing Street insisted government policy on the pay cap had not changed.

"At lunchtime, there were signs that the government was listening to our calls, but by evening they voted to keep the pay cap in place," Davies said. "Our members' summer of protest continues."

Meanwhile, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) had earlier welcomed government suggestions that the pay cap would be reviewed. TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady insisted that the public were in favour of supporting a pay rise for public sector workers, and cited a recent TUC poll showing that 76 per cent of voters – including 68 per cent of Conservative voters – backed a wage increase.


Jonathan Cribb, senior research economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, told People Management

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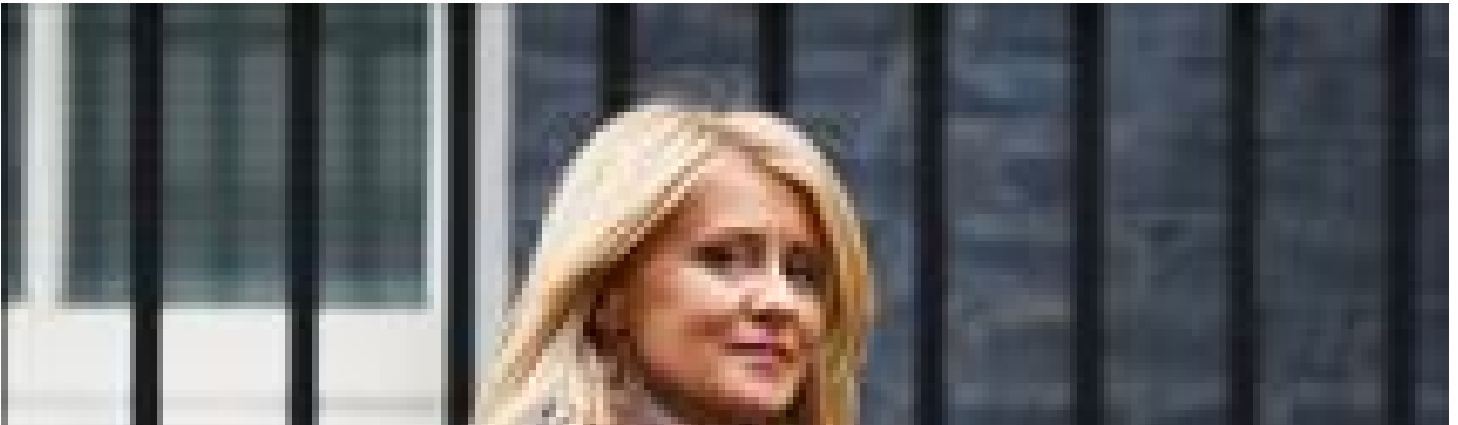
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