

Funding the Future

Data on doctors leaving the NHS could not justify the p...

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I was approached by David Burke of the Daily Mirror yesterday to comment on this data in the context of the new pension tax reliefs supposedly created to induce doctors who had retired after their 'pension freedom' choices to return to work:

Question



Wes Streeting

Labour

Ilford North  Commons

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) nurses, (b) health visitors and (c) hospital and community health services doctors left the NHS in England in 2021-22 broken down by reason for leaving.

Answer



Will Quince

Conservative

Colchester  Commons

Answered on

1 November 2022

The following table shows annual leavers and the reason for leaving in National Health Service Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) staff groups in NHS trusts and other core organisations from 30 April 2021 to 30 April 2022, headcount.

Reason for leaving	HCHS Doctors	Nurses	Health visitors
All reasons	20,218	39,912	1,032
Bank Staff not fulfilled minimum work requirement	17	12	-
Death in Service	40	202	1
Dismissal - Capability	15	194	14
Dismissal - Conduct	22	132	1
Dismissal - Some Other Substantial Reason	13	83	1
Dismissal - Statutory Reason	4	4	-
Employee Transfer	67	245	16
End of Fixed Term Contract	3,741	324	4
End of Fixed Term Contract - Completion of Training Scheme	779	21	-
End of Fixed Term Contract - End of Work Requirement	188	77	2
End of Fixed Term Contract - External Rotation	1,253	2	-
End of Fixed Term Contract - Other	491	74	-
Flexi Retirement	98	563	37
Has Not Worked	9	12	-
Merged Organisation - Duplicate Record	1	-	-
Mutually Agreed Resignation - Local Scheme with Repayment	-	19	-
Mutually Agreed Resignation - National Scheme with Repayment	3	3	-

The data provides no support for the argument that doctors are leaving the NHS because of their pension arrangements. They may be, because 8,919 out of more than 20,000 departures are for unstated reasons, but pension matters are only referred to twice with regard to actuarial adjustments, and there are only 105 such cases in all. That figure is insignificant in that case.

As a result, [I pointed out](#) that:

If [the government] don't know how many doctors are retiring for this reason, why did they change the pension policy for everybody to keep 105 doctors in the NHS?

The [Guardian](#) also picked up the story, taking quotes from me straight from The Mirror:

It looks like they used the fact that they know doctors are leaving for this reason to provide a pensions bung to the wealthy.

They haven't got an evidence base for this policy, and that's good enough to say it can't have been for retiring NHS doctors.

Let's put it another way. The government saw an excuse to increase tax giveaways to the very wealthy and took it. £1 billion could be found for them, but not to settle wage disputes on a proper basis. You cannot make hypocrisy on that scale up.