



# Branch Newsletter



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## Facilities time

A straw poll of our regions health branches indicates that it has become increasingly difficult to secure reasonable paid release for our lay officials. For some branches it has been a struggle that they have to repeatedly meet head on, due to employer resistance and the resultant time and effort involved in getting over these hurdles is generally disproportionate to the actual request, and only serves to further undermine the principles of partnership working. Even those branches with seemingly well established partnership working agreements are finding that securing time out for their representatives is becoming more of a challenge.

Agenda for Change was a turning point, it laid the foundation for "Partnership Working" and most health organisation employers soon recognised that the partnership approach underpinned and facilitated the development of sound and effective employee relations through the NHS and the majority of health organisations embraced this—albeit to a varying degree! However, with evolution of time and the governments increasing determination to see cuts to public services across the NHS, the partnership working ethos has increasingly been left by the wayside. Yet, the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook has not significantly changed its approach to partnership working, and Part 1 of this document sets out the principles of local partnership.

It also clearly identifies the need for the employers to ensure that "... *The representatives of trade unions and other staff organisations, recognised for the purpose of collective bargaining at local level, are released appropriately to participate in the partnership process and that nominated officers of local staff representatives can be fully involved in the local partnership arrangements*"

It has an entire section dedicated to "Time off and Facilities for Trade Union Representatives" (Part 4; Section 25) which reinforces the benefits of good partnership working with regards to its continuation towards the delivery of improved services to patients and users.

This very detailed section encompasses and addresses the key elements related to the duties and activities involved with being a trade union activist, and recommends that local discussion about the levels of release need to take into account the size and location of the membership as well as the expected workload that would be associated with the role.

It also identifies that, subject to the needs of the service and adequate notification, accredited reps should be permitted paid time off which, amongst other things includes time to prepare for and attending meetings, training and disseminating information and outcomes to the members during working hours.

However the employer is becoming increasingly selective about upholding these principles and more often than not, the impact on service provision is being used as a reason for not granting requests from union representatives for protected time away from work to deal with employment-related matters involving their members. Facilities time is a right—not some "grace and favour" arrangement to be accommodated by the employer as and when they chose, yet this is exactly what seems to be happening and is often accompanied by the rationale that they can't afford to allow reps to have this time out as it has a negative impact on service delivery.

What these employers seem unwilling or unable to comprehend is that by observing and upholding the principles of facilities time / release arrangements for trade union representatives as set out in law and the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service handbook there are positive benefits to be had. For example; increased productivity and attendance, because employee issues such as sickness absence, disciplinary and grievance matters can be addressed in a timely manner whereas being deliberately obstructive (or possibly just obtuse) simply leads to amongst other things, stagnation, employee disenchantment, delays and unnecessarily protracted staff absence.

The consequences of refusing to accommodate reasonable facilities time requests on these grounds are far-reaching and the employers need to look beyond the immediate "time off" request to the potential of overall benefits; they need to recognise that a couple of hours away from work spent dealing with a members case or negotiating a policy now could save everyone many more hours further down the line. There is also an increasing tendency for employers who have signed up to full time release arrangements for their senior staffside leads(s) to expect them to undertake the bulk of the representation duties within the organisation, but this is unacceptable on a number of levels including time restraints, branch geography, case workload, and training issues.

Local trade union representatives undertake specific activist training in order to undertake the duties of the role they have been elected to. If they are not afforded the time or the opportunity to utilise the skills they have acquired it will inevitably lead to deskilling and reduced confidence which in turn could potentiate an increased risk of errors and misrepresentation.

Ultimately, facilities time should be protected time, and by and large this is the case thanks to the law, for those of us working within the Health Service organisations, the NHS terms and condition handbook. However, it is something that we as (lay) trade union representatives need to remain vigilant about and not be afraid to challenge attempts by the employer to undermine our rights to reasonable paid time out. Jackie Robinson Divisional Secretary

## UNISON Retirement members Conference 2010



**Retired members** will join their working colleagues and their communities to fight the drastic cuts about to be unleashed on the public services– that was the overwhelming message from the unions retired members annual conference in Southport. Some 400 UNISON retired members gathered in the north west town in mid-October vowing to defend the public services that UNISON members provide and which many retired members depend on.

The tone for the Conference was set when north west regional convenor Diane Kelly said that retired members could be part of a new coalition– a coalition supporting public services. She told delegates; you can be involved at the heart of this coalition; a coalition formed by you helping your branches to build alliances outside the union, helping branches to build alliances with community groups and the people who use and rely on public services to get the message across; that there is an alternative to the cuts. Conference carried an emergency motion submitted by the Leicester County retired members section, highlighting the fact that retired members have a key role to play in countering the perceived wisdom that cuts are the only option. It also called for regions and branches to involve their retired members in all strategies involving the cuts. Joyce Mead of the National retired members committee advised delegates; “When you leave this conference and go back to your regions and branches, ask what they are doing and how you can help”

In the unlikely event that they are not doing anything, ask them why not !” General secretary Dave Prentice sent a warmly received message of support to the conference, calling on all delegates to get involved in the lobbying and local events being held on October 19th and to support the National Pensioners Convention Rally and lobby. Conference also debated cuts in housing benefits which would adversely affect 180.000 pensioners who would lose the equivalent of £624 .00 per year. Ted Collins of the national committee explained that the Chancellor had promised’ not to hide the hard choices from the British people, or bury them in the small print; but the attack on housing benefit is another clear reminder that we are defiantly ‘not all in this together’

“Whilst the rich have been let off, the poor are being left to pick up the cost of the recession”

Other matters considered in Southport included the setting up of a National care service, safeguarding winter fuel allowance, hospital support services, and improvements to the state pension. Leaving Southport, delegates were determined to get involved, or to be more accurate, keep involved. The simple message was 135.000 retired members can help make a real difference in the challenges ahead.

Ian Mc Kenna Retired Members & Pensions Branch Officer.

## Attention all professionally registered UNISON members

UNISON’s **Professional Registration Unit (PRRU)** has produced a 4 page guidance document for members to refer to because; in the event that an allegation or complaint has been made against you and you have been disciplined or dismissed then it is likely that you will be referred to your professional registration body for investigation.

A Committee of the registration body will then consider whether or not, as a result of the allegation or complaint;

- Your fitness to practice is impaired
- You are suitable to remain on your professional register with or without restriction
- You are no longer suitable to remain on your professional register.

As a member in this situation, it is essential that you know what needs to be done and by whom. There will be some elements of the case that require local branch intervention, whereas others will require intervention at a regional level or above.

However the timeliness of any intervention is key and the importance of engaging with your union in a timely manner will enable you to secure the right level of representation at each stage of any process and also affords your representative (s) sufficient time to familiar themselves with your case details. A copy of this guidance can be downloaded from the branch website [www.eeas-unison.com](http://www.eeas-unison.com) or by using the following link; <http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/19139.pdf> If you are unable to access the document using these methods then please contact me ([jrobinson@eeas-unison.com](mailto:jrobinson@eeas-unison.com) or 0789035793) and I will put a hard copy in the post to you. J Robinson Div

Thanks to all Staff of the East of England Ambulance Service, in particular all those Operational Staff who have had to come in and work over an unusually extended ‘revelry’ period where at times patience will have been stretched beyond all reasonable limits !! **A Happy New Year to you ALL**

## Eastern Region Disabled Members AGM

**Nikki Young** reported that she was unable to access the Regional Women's training and development day 2010. It was suggested that two motions submitted from the National Women's committee for the next national women's conference can be discussed. It was agreed that our regional officer send a letter on behalf of this group to the Regional women's officers and the chair of the Regional Women's Committee.

### WORKPLAN for 2011

The suggested dates for the action day is Saturday January 29th. The venue for this to be decided, Debbie will advise in due course. The Training week end dates for 2011 are the 4th and 5th March, suggested venue Peterborough and the precise location to be finalised.

The debate took place on the importance of Self organised Groups, and in particular the involvement of Disabled members of UNISON who take part in the SOG's. This came about during the discussion on the work plan for 2011. It was agreed that Disability Awareness days were part of the cycle of activity for all members of UNISON, and formed an essential part of the disabled members involvement. The issue about the SOG review is something that has to be dealt with by this committee and by all disabled members. We need an day of action in January of some description and then a policy meeting in Feb or March. Keynote speakers would be helpful if this committee could get them to attend the day of action / awareness day. It was agreed that it is necessary to raise the profile of this committee, and to this end Pauline mentioned that our Chair Peter Stafford was 'reported on' in the latest issue of UNISON Focus in relation to number of comments that he made from the rostrum at the recent National Disabled Members Conference. There followed the Election of Branch Officers for the Year.

Dave Edwards was elected as;

Education Officer-also as Sub Communications Officer.

A budget update was handed out in paper form. From January to the present time the budget of £3300 is now at a balance of £1.553 this figure does not include today's meeting and associated expenses.

### 2010 NDM Conference Feedback

Peter Stafford expressed his thanks to all members of the region who stood in at short notice to cover for the absence of some members who were unable to attend. He reported back on all relevant motions and amendments from this region whether successful or not. Nikki Young informed the committee that she had composed a report about the 'flavour of the conference' and would be submitting this at a later date. Debbie reported that she was inspired by the whole experience, and was especially delighted that she was part of the Eastern Region team that won the quiz at the social night. Pauline informed the committee that she intends to report back to the National Disabled Members Committee about the very good access at the Conference. Meeting dates for 2011 were deferred until the March Meeting. Polly asked all those members of this committee due to retire in the next 3-4 years to make sure they get involved in the retired members committee.

Minutes circulated by Dave Edwards Branch Disabled Members Officer.

## National Ambulance Black Members Committee

**As the Black Members** Officer of your local UNISON branch, I am also on the National Ambulance BME Committee which I joined in the May of 2009. The National Ambulance BME Committee holds their meetings on a regular basis every 3 months, and the Committee is there to help and advise Black members in various trusts which forms a BME network for their members. By me joining it has helped myself and Peter Davis to form a Diversity network Group for the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust. On Thursday December 16th the National Ambulance BME Committee met to hold elections for a new chairman.

The previous Chairman was Neville Levy from the great Western Ambulance Service, and the new Chairman is Ricky Lawrence from the London Ambulance Service. We then elected two Vice Chairmen to which I am one, the other was Denis Moss from the Welch Ambulance Service. We also elected a General Secretary Alexandra Ankla. So it is to inform you that as one of the Chairmen of the national BME Committee I will be attending the Black members Conference as a Delegate for our branch in January 2011 from 21st to 23rd.

If any members would like to attend along with me as a visitor, the Conference is being held in Glasgow. Please contact me on the email address or Mobile Number at the back of this newsletter.

Many Thanks & Happy New Year Anand M Pillai

### E-mailing the UNISON Bird

**Thanks again** to you eagle-eyed members out there who spotted a small but nonetheless important typo error in my unison e-mail address as listed in last month's Unison newsletter. I guess I could try and pass it off as a "deliberate error" designed to see if anyone really reads the newsletter in great depth...?, but joking aside, we do appreciate it when someone makes us aware of these things, because whilst the majority are insignificant, there are occasions when it can make a great deal of difference. Here's the correct version [jrobinson@eeas-unison.com](mailto:jrobinson@eeas-unison.com) or you can also use the [jackie.robinson2@nhs.net](mailto:jackie.robinson2@nhs.net) (Just don't forget the all important "2" please)

Jackie Robinson Divisional Secretary

Cont >> They have families to feed and mortgages to pay and the prospect of a two-year pay and increment freeze means it is not an easy option.

In return for the agreement, staff terms and conditions under Agenda for Change would also be protected. A number of trusts have recently imposed changes on the workforce, and these should be reversed. In addition, the employers have asked the treasury not to implement the 1% increase in employees pensions contributions, due to go up on 1st April 2012 as part of their offer. "We want to give this offer serious consideration, but the final decision will be in the hands of our members"

The 'no compulsory agreement' would apply to staff on Bands 1-6. Above that between 7-9 covering managers and senior clinicians, trusts will seek to find alternatives, such as re-deployment, before making any redundancies. Its likely that all Health Unions will be consulting in the immediate future with their executives to decide the next steps.

Its unlikely that any discussions would be completed before the end of February. Any National agreement would then be the subject of local agreement from both Staff, their Trade Unions and NHS Trusts. Staff below £12,000 pa would still get their maximum £250 increase.

UNISON Press Release

## Tough choices up ahead ?

**UNISON**, the UK's largest public service union, has said during December that workers face a difficult decision over whether to accept the NHS Employers offer to guarantee compulsory redundancies in England, in return for agreeing to freezing their pay and incremental progression for two years.

Mike Jackson Senior National Officer said;

The NHS is going through a hard time with trusts being told to make £20 bn in efficiency savings. The offer of a no compulsory redundancy agreement has the potential to offer job security, but our members are still being asked to make a very tough choice. They know only too well, that more job losses will hit the quality of patient care.

See column 2 >>>>

In the forthcoming year 2011, to help improve visual communications to all our members, it is proposed to increase our numbers of Newsletters to issuing 3 every 2 months instead of just one monthly edition. Note-Timing will vary, but another newsletter will be sent out this month (Jan). E M Comms

## UNISON Branch Officer Listing 2010

Please note where a Branch Officer has taken on other roles these are also listed.

Chairperson Ross Stanton 07733225887 ross.stanton@eastamb.nhs.uk  
& Equalities Officer. & zolaisgod@hotmail.co.uk  
**Suffolk County lead Job share** with Gary Applin until the AGM.  
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Secretary Kevin Risley 07866573149 Kevin.risley@eastamb.nhs.uk  
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Divisional Sec NFK/ Sfk Barry Jarvis 07725065539 Barry.Jarvis@eastamb.nhs.uk  
Divisional Sec Essex & Herts Vacant  
Divisional Sec Bedfordshire & Cambridge Jackie Robinson 07890357493  
Jackie.robinson2@nhs.net or jrobinson@eeas-unison.com

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Communications Eric Miller 07787644678 eric\_miller@talk21.com  
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Education Ian Cook 07932680885 Ian.cook@eastamb.nhs.uk  
Coordinator ickook@aol.com  
Welfare Alan Chamberlain 07736110725 alan.chamberlain@eastamb.nhs.uk  
**Job Shared** with Carole Taylor 07745549287 carole.taylor@eastamb.nhs.uk

**NON EMERGENCY SERVICES Officer Carole Taylor 07745549287**  
carole.taylor@eastamb.nhs.uk

Disabled Members Dave Edwards 07884327916 Dave.edwards1@nhs.net  
I.C.T. Officer Darren Meads 07534900247 dmeads@eeas-unison.com  
& Website  
Pensions Ian Mc Kenna & 07870544241 ian.mckenna@eastamb.nhs.uk  
Retired Members Officer iatracey@mckenna2003.fsnet.co.uk  
LGBT Members Still a Vacant Post  
Women's Officer Carole Taylor 07745549287 carole.taylor@eastamb.nhs.uk  
Job Shared with Lesley Hilton BHE 07989786661 lhilton@eeas-unison.com

### County Leads

Beds County lead Rep Jackie Robinson 07890357493 jrobinson@eeas-unison.com  
Herts County Lead Rep (Interim) J Robinson 07890357493  
Jackie.robinson2@nhs.net  
Cambs County Lead Rep Tim Killick tkillick@eeas-unison.com  
Also L/L Learning Rep / ULR Rep. 07540079994  
Essex County Lead Rep Richard Lewis 07837733071 ricadolewis1976@yahoo.co.uk  
Suffolk County lead Rep Gary Applin (**Job Shared**) gapplin@eeas-unison.com  
**with Ross Stanton until AGM**  
Norfolk County Lead Carole Taylor 07745549287 carole.taylor@eastamb.nhs.uk  
Environmental Officer Gary Applin 07773136495 gary.applin@eastamb.nhs.uk  
Black members Officer Anand Pillai 07504703170 anand.pillai@eastamb.nhs.uk  
(Interim) 07504703170 Anandm.pillai@ntworld.com  
Labour Link Officer John Lee 07719660747 John.Lee@essexamb.nhs.uk  
International Officer Richard Lewis 07837733071 ricadolewis1976@yahoo.co.uk

### Health & Safety Leads

H & S Lead Beds Vacant - For the time being contact Rik Gray  
H & S Lead Essex John Cogan John@eastamb.nhs.uk  
H & S Lead Norfolk Rik Gray 07876182084 Tropical1979@yahoo.co.uk  
H & S Lead Herts Brenda Palfreman 07917308911 b.palfreman@nhs.net  
H & S Lead Suffolk Tim Ingall 0792044 Tm-Ingall-unison@driftway.plus.com  
H&S Lead Cambridge Alan Chamberlain 07736110725 alan@archamberlain.co.uk  
Branch Accounts Auditors Andy Broad & Candy Tilson  
**Young members Officer Vacant**  
Regional Organiser UNISON Still to be advised.  
UNISON Direct 0845 355 0845 or visit UNISON at www.unison.org.uk

**Note- Please inform Communications if your details change in any way at all.**

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**UNISON**  
the public service union

## Nothing but a 'Mirage'



UNISON the UK's largest Union, called on the government to 'think again' about their spending plans in the light of today's cross party Health Select committee report, warning that they will test services to the limit.

The Union is reiterating its warning that Government plans to significantly cut budgets and push through re-organisations in both social care and the NHS pose a huge danger for services and the people who rely on them. Dave Prentice said; The report highlights serious issues about the ability of both social care and the NHS, to deliver the unprecedented levels of efficiency savings demanded by the government, without services being drastically hit. UNISON has long been warning the public about not being fooled. Tory promises to protect the NHS are nothing but a 'Mirage' For efficiency savings, read cuts. The damaging effects on services and patients is already visible.

Across the country health trusts are cutting non-essential operations, shedding jobs, and closing wards and waiting lists are on the up. A recent survey by UNISON revealed that 80% of staff are struggling with an increased workload, and almost a third say patient care is suffering. The recent White paper represents the biggest over-hall of the NHS in its history, and it will only pile more pressure onto already stretched staff and services. The last thing that patients, staff, and health trusts need now is a chaotic reorganisation.

The White Paper threatens to drag the NHS to the brink, and this report backs up our key concerns that these damaging plans have not been properly thought through, or even properly costed.

The union is warning that there has been a complete lack of coordination in the period since the White paper was published, and the government has not communicated a clear narrative to support P.C.T's and other NHS organisations in implementing the changes.

The government has not yet provided even a broad estimate of the likely cost of the reorganisation. The union is calling on the government to ensure that the next round of White paper documents presents a clear assessment of the likely costs, both direct and indirect, and demonstrates how they are to be accommodated into wider spending plans. In social care the picture is similarly bleak. The report exposes the Secretary of State's claim that social care provision will not be affected by spending cuts, as a lie. Evidence on the ground backs this up; councils across the country are already shutting down very valuable social care services, like day centres, meals on wheels, and charges for other services such as home care are on the up.

Unison Press Release

### Annual General Meeting- 2011

**Members** are advised that this year's Branch Annual General Meeting will be held between 18-30hrs & 21-30 hrs on the **2nd March 2011** at the Moreton Hall Community Centre Symonds Rd, Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP32-7EW. A light buffet will be available upon arrival from 1830 hrs. Further information, including the agenda, proposals & directions to the meeting venue can be found on the branch website [www.eeas-unison.com](http://www.eeas-unison.com) or by contacting the Divisional Secretary Jackie Robinson on 07890357493/ [jrobinson@eeas-unison.com](mailto:jrobinson@eeas-unison.com). Posters advertising the AGM will also be circulated to **all sites** falling within this branch's geographical and employer group boundaries, any assistance with ensuring that they are prominently displayed would be appreciated. Jackie Robinson Div Secretary