



Press Release

24 July 2009

The Ambulance service union, UNISON¹, has demanded an immediate inquiry into the use of student paramedics on front-line ambulances by the East of England Ambulance Trust² last Friday and Saturday.

UNISON says that the decision by Ambulance Trust bosses to 'volunteer' the students had stunned ambulance staff across the region. It was known that some students had refused to take the risk and that a number of senior managers had objected to the move 'in the strongest possible terms', even refusing to work with the inexperienced students and represents yet another move by the Trust to reduce the number of qualified staff on each ambulance.

It was further revealed that, while ambulance bosses were willing to interrupt the studies of student paramedics this weekend, a number of other student paramedics were already the subject of disciplinary proceedings for not sufficiently completing their studies.

UNISON says that a full inquiry into the Trust's actions is needed because last weekend was not in any way exceptional and if the Trust cannot put qualified crews on ambulances now, then very shortly, with the onset of summer pressures and the Swine Flu pandemic, the service will simply not cope.

The union says that it simply cannot understand why, after three years and the injection of millions of pounds, the Trust is in such disarray. UNISON also questions why, after three years, Trust has just re-advertised all of its top (Director) posts? It says that this is a clear indication that the Trust is in serious difficulty and highlights the need for a full inquiry.

For further information and local contacts email or telephone John Toomey: 07908-672894 / j.toomey@unison.co.uk

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Notes to editor:

¹ UNISON is Britain's biggest trade union with more than 1.3 million members. Members are people working in the public services, for private contractors providing public services and in the essential utilities. They include frontline staff working full or part time in local authorities, NHS, police service, colleges and schools, electricity, gas and water industries, transport and the voluntary sectors. Further information can be obtained from www.unison.org.uk

² As of the 1st July 2006 the Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Ambulance & Paramedic Service, East Anglia Ambulance Service and Essex Ambulance Service merged and are now called the East of England Ambulance Service. Further information can be obtained from www.eeastamb.nhs.uk