



Branch Newsletter

March 2007

PTS Contract News

On Friday 16th February, the East of England Ambulance Trust made the formal announcement that the entire B&H PTS contract had been awarded to an outside provider, Medical Services. The decision to take up the recommendation of the Consortium was taken by the seven hospital trusts that cover the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire locality. In their report, they state that the decision to select the private company was based on several points, all of which we disagree with.

UNISON views any form of privatisation to the service as unacceptable. In particular, the loss felt by our service will be huge and UNISON and A&E staff do convey their sincerest sympathies to our PTS colleagues.



Photograph courtesy of Emma Reeves, Welwyn & Hatfield Times.

On the 28th February, a press conference was held by this UNISON branch in partnership with the Trust to make the general public aware of the changes and potential implications that the transformation may have. Local and national reporters were present to hear the views of PTS staff, UNISON and the Trust.

the new company. The PTS staff gave an excellent representation of how the majority of PTS staff feel about the uncertain times ahead and were able to convey their disappointment directly the media about this privatisation.

Staff are understandably disappointed to find themselves no longer working for the NHS and namely the East of England Ambulance Trust. They have not yet met their new employer and as a result, many of their questions, such as where they will be based, remain unanswered. John Toomey (UNISON Regional Officer) expressed an unreserved concern that any private company would be unable to provide the extremely high level of care that patients currently receive. John also compared losing our PTS staff to that of 'losing a member of the family'.

Whilst the decision by the hospital trust's to use a private company will not be appealed, it has been made clear that the East of England Ambulance Service would seek to regain this contract and our PTS staff at the very earliest opportunity by way of a re-tendered bid. Rob Ashford (Chief Locality Operating Officer) added that the Trust would remain in a position to quickly restore PTS services in the event that the new private firm were unable to cope.

UNISON's job will now be to support the PTS staff as they transfer across to the new company. Existing PTS members will still be aggressively supported by UNISON during their time with the new private provider. John Toomey confirmed to the press that any attempt to disadvantage NHS staff that are transferred to a private company would be met with swift legal action.

Protecting staff is UNISON's key aim.

UNISON believes that it is essential for all workplaces to have a designated local Steward in order to provide a 'first line' contact for help or advice. The UNISON branch is also seeking more members to become involved in negotiating fairness within the high level meetings.

The outcome of knowing that you are part of developing the Trust in partnership is highly rewarding.

For this reason, people with a confident but rational manner are ideally suited to represent staff on issues that they feel strongly about.



Anyone interested should contact Jackie Robinson on 07890 357493 for an informal discussion.

New website.

Our branch website at www.bhaps-unison.com will soon be replaced with a new one to represent the newly formed East of England Ambulance Branch. From April 30th, visit www.eeas-unison.com for details on UNISON's work.



UNISON branch merger.

For each of the former Beds & Herts, Essex and East Anglia Ambulance Trusts, UNISON had separate branches to represent staff. After this merger, the UNISON branches began developing a plan to merge the union branches to create a single, more powerful branch to represent staff. From April 1st, the new East of England Ambulance Branch will be formed to continue UNISON's work within the new Trust.

On Thursday 22nd February, a meeting was held and the senior officials who will oversee this new branch were elected into a transitional branch committee to take us forward into the new branch.

To ensure that staff continue to be represented by people they are confident in, several important roles were created to further strengthen UNISON's role within the Trust. Below highlights how the new transitional UNISON branch will be structured.

Chairperson	Peter Redfern	Former Essex Branch Chair
Secretary	Kevin Risley	Former NSC Branch Secretary
Treasurer	Steve Beckley	Former NSC Branch Treasurer
Norfolk & Suffolk Divisional Secretary	Barry Jarvis	Former NSC Branch Chair
Herts & Essex Divisional Secretary	Frank Ward	Former Essex Branch Secretary
Beds & Cambridge Divisional Secretary	ballot required.	J. Robinson (former Beds & Herts Branch Secretary) or P. Davis (former Cambs Quadrant Rep)
H&S Officer	Alan Chamberlain	Former NSC H&S Officer
Comms Officer	Eric Miller	Former NSC Comms Officer
Membership Officer	Alan Adams	Former NSC Membership Officer
Education Co-ordinator	Mike Pelling	Former NSC Education Officer
Welfare Officer	Alan Chamberlain	Former NSC H&S Officer
PTS Officer	Ross Stanton	Former NSC PTS Officer
Young Member's Officer	Stuart Reeves	Former Beds & Herts Branch Vice Secretary / Young Members Officer

For the region of Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, both Jackie Robinson (former Branch Secretary for Beds & Herts) and Pete Davies (former quadrant rep for Cambridgeshire) expressed an interest in taking the role. To decide who shall take on the responsibility, a ballot will need to be held for UNISON members within Beds and Cambs to elect their preferred official.

This role will have a direct and important effect on staff so it is vital that a person who is respected by both staff and management is elected.

Jackie Robinson is the secretary and staff side lead of the former Beds & Herts Ambulance Service Branch.

She has many years of experience in taking the lead role in protecting and representing staff, fighting against unfair changes and negotiating with the Trust's Directors over staff issues. She is known to the senior management for her relentless ability to achieve fair working conditions for her members. The staff of her former branch have benefited from her ability to secure her members interests in the changing face of the Ambulance Service and she has continued to achieve fair working conditions for staff and members alike.

UNISON members in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire are asked to give their vote for Jackie Robinson when they receive their ballot papers.



Payroll Changes

In view of the recent continuing problems with the current payroll provider, Supporta Services Ltd, the Trust in partnership with UNISON has taken the decision to move to a new provider.

The past twelve months have been unacceptable for staff and UNISON has supported the Trust in taking this decision. Problems such as incorrect AFC payments, incorrect overtime, basic pay errors and union subscriptions have all been experienced by our members.

The new payroll provider will be Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King Lynn, which currently supports the former East Anglia Trust and many of the hospital Trusts and has excellent history of payroll responsibilities.

Whilst UNISON still reserves the right to take legal action, the move to a new payroll provider will see a far speedier resolution to staff payroll queries.

Some UNISON members are still being charged incorrect subscription rates by Supporta. UNISON and the Trust apologise unreservedly for this and many have already been corrected. We will be completing the remaining staff with the new payroll company by the end of April.

With nearly 2000 members in the East of England Ambulance Service and more than 1.3 million members working across the public services, being part of UNISON means that members have the full weight of Britain's biggest trade union behind you.

www.unison.org.uk

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