



**NATIONAL  
AMBULANCE  
SECTOR COMMITTEE**

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**AMBULANCE SERVICE CLOSE TO BREAKING POINT IN PARTS OF  
COUNTRY**

The ambulance service is relying heavily on the goodwill and commitment of staff to keep up with the huge increase in demand over the last decade, said UNISON, the union representing 20,000 ambulance workers. The union warned that the service is suffering from staff shortages and in some areas the situation is close to reaching breaking point.

Sam Oestreicher, UNISON National Officer for Ambulance Staff said:

“Recent criticisms of ambulance workers in some media fail to acknowledge the fact that staff have been carrying the service for some time.

“It is very galling for ambulance staff to come under fire when members are struggling to cope with ever increasing demands. In England, calls have gone up by a staggering 250,000 per year prompting a major review into the way the service is run. Our members tell us that in some areas the service is already close to breaking point.

“One of the reasons for the increased demand is the growing number of GP surgeries who will not do home visits. It has been left to the ambulance service to fill these gaps by default. UNISON is working with the employers at national level to try and address these issues, but this cannot be done on the cheap or without an increase in resources that reflects the increase in demand.”

Part of the Ambulance Review is considering the skill mix of all ambulance staff alongside the general demands placed on the service. The aim is to ensure that crews and support staff such as those in the control room receive the training and development to meet the needs of patients today.

Sam Oestreicher went on to say:

“Privatisation and outsourcing of Ambulance Patient Transport Services (PTS) has reduced the resources available to some ambulance trusts to meet this demand. UNISON wants a Government guarantee to halt the privatisation of PTS and to fully fund the Ambulance Service Review. New or changed roles must be designed to deliver the best possible improvements to patient care and not to meet financial targets or save money.”

These issues will be among those debated at UNISON’s annual health conference being held in Brighton between 22 and 24 April.

Ends

Further information from Anne Mitchell on 02073830717