



<p><b>NATIONAL AMBULANCE SECTOR COMMITTEE</b></p>
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**Emergency Care Assistant / Support Worker (ECA/SW)**

**National Update**

Recent developments in Great Western Ambulance (GWAS) have given rise to a number of queries on the ECA / SW situation.

The national position remains that South West Ambulance (SWAST) is the accredited pilot site for this role and whilst it was proposed last year that GWAS would be incorporated into the pilot that has not been implemented and the issue is now a matter for local resolution.

Arrangements outside of SWAST vary from trust to trust. However all English trusts through the National Ambulance partnership Forum (NAPF) have signed up to follow the pilot model and abide by the outcome of a national evaluation of the role as represented in the National ECA resource pack. Any local concerns over deployment of the ECA / SW role should be raised with reference to the deployment scoping document contained in the resource pack. The pack has been forwarded by the NAPF to the NHS Staff Council Job Evaluation Group (JEG) with a request that they evaluate the role with the aim of producing an ECA / SW national job profile.

A programme is being initiated to conduct an in depth analysis of the SWAST pilot by an independent expert that will examine aspects of the role relating to service delivery. It is hoped to be able to publish a detailed action plan including timetable of this process in October.

UNISON has previously raised concerns in relation to the level of responsibility expected of Paramedics in supervision of this role. The Health Professions Council (HPC) response to these is reproduced in full below. In short, it is the employers' responsibility to ensure any role they deploy is fit for purpose although Paramedics are under a duty to formally report any evidence that suggests this might not be the case. Paramedics should also ensure that anyone under their supervision does not work outside of their scope of practice and in the case of ECA / SW's this is as defined by the ECA resource pack and their employer.

**UNISON National Ambulance Sector Committee, September 2008**

## **Response from HPC to UNISON concerns over Paramedic responsibilities relating to the Emergency Care Assistant / Support Worker role.**

“Thank you for your recent letter regarding the responsibilities of HPC registrants with reference to supervision and delegation.

“As you are aware, we consider every matter referred to us via our fitness to practise process on a case by case basis, taking into account the individual circumstances in order to decide whether we need to take any action in order to protect members of the public. The purpose of the fitness to practise process is to protect members of the public, not to persecute registrants for following the policy or practice of their employer in good faith. The purpose of the process is also not to persecute registrants for the errors or failings of other staff they work with. We consider that if registrants make informed, reasonable decisions, in good faith, with the care of patients at the heart of the decision, then they are very unlikely to have any contact with our fitness to practise process.

“In your letter you outlined sections of our standards of conduct, performance and ethics, two of which are reproduced below with our comments:

*Whenever you give tasks to another person to carry out on your behalf, you must be sure that they have the knowledge, skills and experience to carry out the tasks safely and effectively.*

“This standard is about ensuring that tasks are not delegated inappropriately. In circumstances where an employer has clearly certified that an employee working with a registrant is competent in certain areas, the registrant would be able to be reasonably sure that they have the knowledge, skills and experience to carry out those tasks. If we were to consider a case about delegation we would want to assess the registrant's responsibility and in circumstances such as this I think that it is highly unlikely that a panel would consider that the registrant had acted inappropriately.

“You also refer to a duty to report. Standard one of the standards of conduct, performance and ethics says that registrants have a duty to protect service users from any situation which might place them in danger. It is therefore important that registrants bring to their employer's attention matters about the conduct or competence of the registrants or other staff they work with.

*You must always continue to give appropriate supervision to whoever you ask to carry out tasks. You will be responsible for the appropriateness of the decision to delegate.*

“You express concerns about the ability of the paramedic to properly supervise such tasks if he or she is treating another patient or driving. You ask whether it would be inappropriate to delegate in such circumstances.

“The important part of this standard is 'appropriate' and as such we would not make a blanket statement that it was inappropriate to delegate in such circumstances. Whenever we consider a matter referred to us, we need to make decisions in light of the individual circumstances, taking into account, amongst other things, the environment in which the registrant works. In the context of paramedic practice, any decisions would take account of the working environment and the constraints this can place on the direct, one to one supervision of delegated tasks. Ultimately, it would be an individual professional decision for the paramedic to take as to whether the delegation was appropriate in the circumstances (taking into account any other relevant factors, such as the policy or guidance of their employer).”