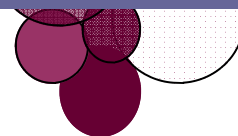


# THE GRAPEVINE

## FOUNDATION TRUST UPDATE



**As part of our ongoing work to secure the interests of our members and patients during the application process for Foundation Trust status, I have written to Chief Executive Ken Wenman.** In that recent letter, I outlined our Unison branch's stance on the issue and asked for some assurances about pay and conditions — matters which have most concerned the members that we have spoken to. I am now pleased to report that the Chief Executive has responded with some key assurances.

FT status will be the biggest change to affect the Ambulance Service and our members since the introduction of NHS Trusts. It will inevitably have repercussions in the way that we are managed, because the Trust will have more freedom in the way it conducts its business. Many members have expressed deep concern about the possibility of the Trust using these freedoms to develop contracts of employment that will erode the advances made with the introduction of Agenda for Change (A4C).

Ken Wenman's response, (available to view on our branch website at [www.swamb.com](http://www.swamb.com)), answers very concisely our questions regarding his intentions. He has stated that he has no intentions of moving away from A4C. But he goes further, also stating that he believes that the Trust will be in a position to make improvements on these terms and conditions through local agreement. This is a big step forward as we have not, until now, had such assurances. It has always been our position that we would negotiate above and beyond A4C where this was in the interest of our members. Unison, as the only recognised trade union in the South Western Ambulance Service, has been instrumental in securing these assurances for you. We will now continue to ensure that the local agreements described in the letter work in the interests of all our members.

The response from Ken Wenman also states that

there is no intention to move away from national bargaining with regard to pay. This is also a crucial statement and should give us confidence that even though the A4C arrangements and pay bargaining are not perfect by any means, we will at least be treated the same as the wider NHS.

Nationally, Unison has objected to the principals of FT status. However, as a branch, we have decided to work with the trust. This is because after writing to our members to consult with them on the issue, we know that our members want us to have an influence on the application wherever possible. We can only do so if we are engaged with management, which is preferable to not having a say and then having the results imposed upon us.

The next stage of the FT application will see the Trust reviewing all its operations and procedures to ensure that it will be ready for the scrutiny that the application process puts it under. Unison will be working closely with the Trust to ensure that you are represented on all the issues. Our role is to challenge the Trust where we believe that it's workforce or patients will be adversely affected by the changes. We know that Ken and the Trust understand this and are listening to our views. Working parties have been running for some time with Unison involvement and the outcomes of these groups are to be reviewed very soon with further work to follow. Unison will be able to keep you informed about the important milestones and outcomes of these discussions. We feel that the Trust has shown its commitment to working with us. It's now up to us to ensure that we continue to use these opportunities on your behalf and in your interest.

- Ian Hopkins,  
Branch Secretary



Visit our branch website at [www.swamb.com](http://www.swamb.com)

## UNISON TRIGGERS RE-OPENER CLAUSE

**The soaring cost of living has led to a vote by senior health activists of UNISON to trigger a re-opener clause on the recent multi-year pay deal.**

The call for a better pay deal by UNISON's Health Executive comes in the wake of increases in the costs of fuel, energy and food which are now driving inflation way beyond the 2% assumption made at the time of the agreement earlier this year.

UNISON Head of Health Karen Jennings, said: "... health workers are already struggling to cope with almost daily increases in the cost of basic necessities such a food and energy. The re-opener clause was central to this year's multi-year pay talks because it provided a much needed safety net against just this situation. We will be gathering evidence to present to the independent Pay Review Body to show that there have been significant changes since the deal was negotiated in the spring. Our members reluctantly accepted 2.75% this year but the 2.54% and 2.5% increases negotiated for the next two years now fall well short of all expected inflation figures".

UNISON will work with the other health unions to submit new evidence to the NHS Pay Review Body and make the case that the pay rates for 2009/2010 should be reviewed. For further information about inflation, see our guide in issue 10 of the Grapevine.

## Free Legal help for Unison Members

As a branch, we like to try and ensure that our members are aware of all the benefits available to them. This is to remind you that as a unison member, you can get free legal advice on any matter, whether work-related or not. This service entitles you to receive a 30 minute telephone interview with a Unison solicitor.

Unison offers a wide range of legal services for all it's members, providing the widest range of legal help for union members in the UK. Advice and assistance is available not just for work issues, but for you and your family outside the workplace too. In order to qualify for legal help you need to have been a Unison member at least 3 weeks before any incident or accident occurs and membership subscriptions must be up-to-date.

Unison members can also use our free wills service and are eligible for cut price conveyancing.

On top of all this, you can get free legal representation if you ever face criminal charges arising out of work. Unison can also represent members for road traffic offences if your job is at risk should you be convicted.

For more information, or to join Unison, please speak to your nearest representative, or call Unison Direct on **0845 355 0845** for more details.

## News in brief

### Improved Communications For H&S Reps

In an effort to improve the resources available to Unison Health & Safety representatives in the South West (and to help encourage more people to take up this role), the regional H&S committee have been looking at ways of improving networking between H&S stewards.

As part of this plan, Unison have launched a new South West H&S newsletter. Copies of this are available to download from the "reps resources" page of our own branch website ([www.swamb.com](http://www.swamb.com)). If you are a rep and do not have access to the reps resources section, please email us at: [russfox@talktalk.net](mailto:russfox@talktalk.net)

### Mileage rate increase

It was agreed at the Staff Council meeting on 1st July 2008 to increase the rates of allowances by 10% in Annex L in the NHS Terms & Conditions Handbook.

Unison and other unions had asked for an immediate uplift of 5 pence per mile on all rates, pending the completion of the mileage allowance review. The management side had initially refused to offer any increase at all but negotiations have now resulted in a 10% increase.

To ensure that our members have the information they need, details of the new rates have been made available to download from the index page of our branch website [www.swamb.com](http://www.swamb.com).

Views expressed in this publication do not always reflect those of the editor. Nor do they necessarily reflect national UNISON policy or opinion.