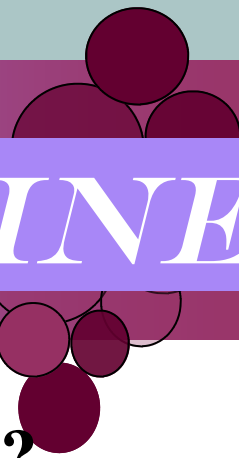


**UNISON**

South Western Ambulance Branch Update



# THE GRAPEVINE

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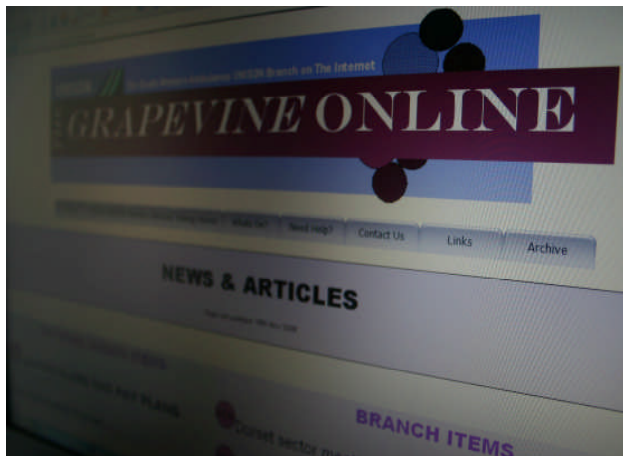


## Are your ears burning?...

I was down the pub the other day. There was the promise of good food, good company, free drinks and good conversation.

If you weren't there, for whatever reason, you missed a good evening. In fact, I might even say that you were missed—because we were talking about you. That is to say, the topics being discussed were *about* you — about your job, your workplace, your rights, your future.

Such meetings are often like this. After all, it's your union, and your branch, and the people there are trying their best to represent your views and your interests in your absence. It's not always easy to attend these meetings, and now that the area we serve is so vast, it is possibly even more difficult. But you are always welcome nonetheless, and if you can't get there, perhaps you can get involved in other ways— If you are not a UNISON member, you could add to our strength by joining. If you are a member, you could pass your views onto your nearest representative, or perhaps you might even consider becoming a representative yourself. In the meantime, all I can do is feed back to you some of what those behind-the-scenes discussions are about, and in return ask you to feed back to me your comments on what you think of how I'm doing. Welcome to issue 3 of *The Grapevine*. - Russell Fox, Editor



The new-look branch website at [www.swamb.com](http://www.swamb.com)  
See back page for details.

- Option No.1
- Option No.2
- Option No. 3

New Uniform Shirt Colours—  
You get to have your say.

# Unions fight 1.5% Pay offer

**The NHS has had a bad year, with huge debts leading to cuts in staff and funding. The government is under pressure, and now it would seem it wants staff to help settle the bill.**

UNISON is asking for a decent pay increase significantly above inflation (currently 3.7%) for ambulance staff and other NHS workers. The government wants any pay rise to be capped at just 1.5 %

Simply put, UNISON, along with other unions, are heading two NHS Pay Review bodies, which are there to negotiate a pay deal. Firstly, There is the *Pay Negotiating Council*, (PNC), which operates for **Admin and Clerical staff, Ambulance Control staff and Ancillary staff**. Then, there is the *Nursing and the Other Health Professions Pay Review Body* (that's another acronym, then: The NOHPRB), which represents **Paramedics and technicians**.

The Department of Health has proposed a 1.5% pay increase for staff covered by the NOHPRB, and has put forward a grim choice to support their 1.5% pay limit -Any more than this, they claim, would lead to job losses and service cuts. Karen Jennings, head for health for UNISON, described this as: "nothing less than blackmail". In a recent article in *The Guardian*, she stated: "UNISON says the government should stay

out of the NOHPRB's deliberations and let it get on with the job".

Meanwhile, at a meeting of the PNC on the 10th November, NHS Employers rejected the claim - and proposed an increase no higher than 2.4% - significantly *less* than the current rate of inflation.

Unison's own evidence to the review body used case studies of members to show how last year's 2.5% pay rise ended up, in effect, as a pay cut – when compared relatively to rising costs of living (ie. rent, council tax, electricity, gas, travel and food).

The management also declined to negotiate on any new terms and conditions, stating that they wanted to see Agenda for Change 'bed down' before making any major changes. The negotiating team was told that no formal offer would be made until at least February.

PNC chair Mike Jackson, of UNISON, said: "We are very disappointed...They are not interested in negotiating and are allowing their hands to be tied by government pressure on public-sector pay".

Keep up to date with this ongoing issue at [www.swamb.com](http://www.swamb.com)

## News in brief

### Lobby tells MP's to listen

**More than a thousand NHS workers lobbied Parliament on 1st November, in an event that UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis described as "historic and defining".**

Stephen Champion of the Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association told the rally that NHS workers had: "had enough of waking up on a Monday morning to find out the government's latest policy on the NHS". He told the rally that the government needed to: "stop, look and listen."

Paramedic and UNISON member Andrea Shields insisted that "The NHS is about treating people—not just about number crunching".

## Dorset Sector Meeting

**A meeting was held for the Dorset Sector of the branch near Lytchett Minster, Poole, on 14th November.** Turn-out was promising, with a few new (and very welcome) faces present. Items discussed included problems with the PROMIS resource system and reduced annual leave levels. Also, concerns were expressed about expectations for staff to do training in their own time. Other issues included problems facing relief staff, lifting and handling on older vehicles, as well as concerns about the new Mercedes vehicles.

There was a frustration that despite management making assurances to staff side that issues such as leave levels would be resolved, they had not yet been acted on. Dave Hunt outlined the ongoing drive to bring Westcountry and Dorset policies (particularly regarding leave, travelling claims and meal breaks) in line with each other, as well as in line with agenda for change requirements. Details of this issue will be published in a future edition of *The Grapevine*.

Chair Alan Lofthouse asked for any problems facing relief staff to be brought to his attention. Dorset relief staff are asked to contact him with any accounts of difficulties. The next sector meeting is to be arranged in the Dorchester area in order to encourage staff from that area to have their say and get involved. Visit [www.swamb.com](http://www.swamb.com) for details.

## Notice From The Membership Secretary

There is now a new, centralised system in place adopted by Unison to collate all members within the same parameters.

Originally Unison kept records of members in differing locations throughout the country and applications for membership were only dealt with by region, sometimes leading to delays by as much as 3 months on some occasions.

Recently, however, all membership details have been absorbed into a central data base using identical details throughout the entire Union.

I have recently completed a 6 day TUC course, training to be able to access the new system and enter details of members on it. The main advantage is that I can ensure that any new applicant can be accepted by Unison within a very few days of receipt of application form and any existing member can have their details updated much quicker.

All I ask to ensure the success of this is that all new application forms and any variations to current member's details be notified direct to me, Richard Pound, at the following address:-

Richard Pound  
Oban  
Knowle St. Giles  
Chard, Somerset

## Your Rights: Bullying At Work

One of the problems with bullying is that the intimidation often works only too well. Many people are too scared to tell anyone else what's happening and end up feeling it's their fault. Bullying undermines your confidence and self-esteem. So the first thing is to be clear about what is unacceptable, bullying behaviour. Bullying includes:

- Violence or the threat of violence
- Calling you names or making jokes about you
- Constant criticism
- Shouting at you, or humiliating you in front of others or in private
- Setting you up to fail by, for example, overloading you with work
- Always making you do the worst or most difficult tasks
- General rudeness and unpleasantness
- Spreading malicious lies and rumours about you

Don't put up with being bullied. You don't have to. Your first aim is for the bullying to stop. You should:

- Speak to the bully, and tell the bully to stop
- If there are other witnesses ask them to note down what they saw or heard
- Tell someone else immediately - this could be a friend, a colleague, or someone senior
- Keep a diary recording each incident large and small - date, time, place

If you are a victim of bullying it is vital you seek help or advice from your union. Your union rep may, if necessary, be able to approach your employer with a complaint with you and/or lodge a grievance on your behalf if necessary. This is a complex area and you will need specialist advice.

You may be off sick as a result of bullying. If you visit your doctor ask them to write down the cause of your illness and stress.

Some employers have very effective systems and procedures in place for dealing with complaints, others have systems on paper only. Remember support from UNISON is available.

Although there are no specific laws covering bullying, employers do have a general legal duty to protect the health and safety of employees. Bullying or allowing bullying by other employees is a breach of that duty for which your employer may be liable.

Bullying may also include sexual or racial overtones which may mean it is also unlawful discrimination.

People who bully should be disciplined or in the worst cases dismissed for their behaviour.

### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

**UNISON Branch Executive Meeting: 6th December, Taunton**

JANCC: 4th December, Trust HQ, Exeter

PPPG (policies and Procedures): 27th November, Trust HQ, Exeter

## YES Vote for NHS Pension Package GRAPEVINE EXCLUSIVE

The Electoral Reform Services have returned the results of the recent vote on the proposed pension package outlined in The Grapevine issue 2, and in information recently sent out with your pay slips.

UNISON has been heavily involved in negotiating on pensions, and was supporting a yes vote to the proposed package, which pledges that the Pensionable age will remain at 60 for current NHS employed staff, and the final salary scheme for all NHS staff will remain in place.

Just under 51,825 ballot papers were counted, with 49,019 valid papers returning a “yes” vote. This gives a yes vote of 94.6 %

## Fresh pickings from The Grapevine Online

We now have a fresh new look for our website. The site, entitled “*The Grapevine-Online*”, contains a fast-growing number of resources and information pages based around a bright and user-friendly interface.

It is hoped that the site can be seen as a first port of call for news and information on your branch, for interest in joining or becoming more involved in UNISON, and as a place to visit if you need help at work.

From the site, you can catch up with ambulance-focused news and articles both nationally and of course right here at branch level. Plus you can find out more about UNISON and how the branch is structured and works.

You can also contact the branch executive members, get

help with work-related issues, view any available reports and minutes of meetings and print current and back-copies of this publication.

In addition, members can also change their contact details and request UNISON to take up a case for them.

The New-look for the site was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> November, with a technical problem surrounding page sizing ironed out within a few days. The site has already attracted many visitors, not only from our own branch but also from other trusts and UNISON branches nationwide.

Please take a regular look. The address is:  
[www.swamb.com](http://www.swamb.com)

### What's In Your Portfolio?

Professional Portfolios are all about personal development and presenting evidence of the skills acquired and needed for your career.

As a UNISON steward, you will be given paid time off to attend training. You will attain new skills and accredited certificates to prove it. Our branch needs Stewards now, so why not become more involved, and support your colleagues in a way which is challenging and personally rewarding? Contact us now.

## Rectifying Unison subscription error

Some members have reported an apparent rise in UNISON subscription rates. There has been no formal rise, and any increase is due to a technical error at national level.

Please be assured that UNISON and the Trust are attempting to identify those affected and rectify the problem. If you have any concerns about your subscription rate, please contact me as soon as possible by email on: [ianhopkins9@btopenworld.com](mailto:ianhopkins9@btopenworld.com), using the subject heading “Unison Subs”.

- Ian Hopkins, Branch Secretary

## Feedback required

If you have any comments on this publication, or on the website, please email me. I welcome ideas, comments and criticism.

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