



THE GRAPEVINE

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DID YOU VOTE YES?

NHS UNISON members have voted 2 to 1 to accept the revised pay offer.

Karen Jennings, UNISON Head of Health, said:

"I believe that workers in the health service deserve better - however UNISON said that the revised offer was the best that could be achieved through negotiation, and the result shows that members recognised that fact.

"We are now putting together our evidence for next year's pay round and we will be making a strong case for a catch-up award. I don't believe health workers will accept a below inflation pay increase for two years running. The latest statistics show that pay growth in the public sector has fallen to its lowest for a decade.

The new pay package is worth 3.4% to the lowest paid. Many staff in the ambulance service will not benefit from this aspect of the deal. There is additional money targeted at training plus a £38 contribution towards professional

fees for Paramedics.

Details of the offer include:

- From 1st November a £400 flat rate increase for those on Bands 1 and 2. Those on Bands 3 and 4 get additional £38 as well as the 2.5%.

- In England only, additional money for staff training targeted directly on non-clinical staff who often lose out when training budgets are cut.

- In England, there will be £38 paid to staff on Bands 5-8(a) who are required to register to practice. This includes Paramedics and is intended as a contribution towards professional fees.

The Grapevine is designed to keep you involved and informed regarding the work that your UNISON branch is doing for and with its members. We always welcome feedback and articles for The Grapevine. Just e-mail the editor at: russfox@talktalk.net

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

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National Concern over ECSW Plans

UNISON and other trade union partners at the National Ambulance Partnership Forum (NAPF) have formally registered their concerns at the proposals for the future of the ECSW role. There are detailed issues raised, but to summarise, the key concerns noted by the NAPF are these:

1. The role as currently proposed isn't sufficient to deal with the demands of deployment on a front-line ambulance.
2. The higher level of supervision which may be required by Paramedics or other practitioners in overseeing the ECSW has yet to be properly reflected in a written format.
3. There has not been sufficient consultation.
4. The current proposals appear to have been shaped by short term targets to the detriment of long term standards of patient care levels.
5. Insufficient information and feedback has been received from the pilot scheme in South Western Ambulance Service.

Unions have advised that their position is not to withdraw from participation in training of ECSW's or from local or national talks on this. The NAPF is due to meet next on 2nd October to further discuss the issues surrounding this role. Our branch of UNISON have been very much involved in both local and national trial and consultation on this issue. Branch Secretary Ian Hopkins said:

"We are providing feedback to a central point nationally, so it is vital that our members continue to provide us with their views and experiences on this, whether positive or

UNISON REPS REQUIRED

Our branch is now more determined than ever to offer as much support and information to our members as possible. We currently have many stations and workplaces without a union representative. Reps are vital to the work we do—they are pivotal as a first port of call for assistance and information.

Reps get paid time off work for training and perform a rewarding and respected role.

If you feel you can help, please contact your nearest existing rep. or email our branch chairman:
ianhopkins@btopenworld.com

Six men From Tolpuddle. . .

The Tolpuddle Martyrs festival took place on the weekend of 13th-15th July right here within the catchment area of The South Western Ambulance Service. The event, which takes place each summer, is a mix of parade, politics and music, and marks the historical events surrounding the group of men known as The Tolpuddle Martyrs. These events are seen by many as the birth of the trade union movement. The short version of the story is this:

In 1832 six men from the Dorset village of Tolpuddle founded *The Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers* to protest against the falling wages among poverty-stricken workers, many of whom were facing starvation. To protect the lives of their fellow workers, the men refused to work for anything less than ten shillings a week.

James Frampton, a local wealthy landowner, feared that such unionism could threaten the power and wealth of the land-owning gentry. He even feared a French-style revolution. On 24th February 1834, James Frampton had the six men arrested, citing an obscure law from the 1790's against "taking oaths"—a law actually intended to prevent mutiny at sea. To protect the interests of the landowners, the six men were sentenced to seven years transportation to the penal colonies of Australia. The sentence produced an immediate outcry among the working classes.



James Lovells John Standfield James Brine
James Hammett George Lovells Thomas Standfield

The branch is planning to set up a new service to its UNISON reps and stewards. Please send your name, workplace and email address, with the subject heading "Rep" to: russfox@talktalk.co.uk. Once the scheme gets up and running, you will be added to an email mailing list and kept informed of all content updates on *The Grapevine online*, and kept informed of other matters which may be of interest.

HOT ISSUES

a quick update on what is currently keeping your branch busy



PAY OFFER - As detailed on the front page, UNISON members have voted to accept the revised pay offer.

MEAL BREAKS - The ever-complicated meal break issue rumbles on in Dorset. A new working group has been established to examine the issue further and come up with a solution that is considered suitable and workable for all concerned. More information on this is detailed in the Dorset news page attached to this edition of The Grapevine.

E.C.P. REGISTRATION - Talks have begun on proposals for the professional registration of ECP's. Representatives from our branch are now involved in discussion on this issue, so if you have any views, please forward them to us. You can comment via our website at www.swamb.com. We will keep you informed of any developments on this issue.

CHANGES TO UNSOCIAL HOURS— We have been involved in negotiations with NHS Employers and other staff-side representatives regarding the proposed changes to unsocial hours payment. More details in the article below.

RAMPLESS VEHICLES - The Branch is still pursuing the issue of lifting and handling on older vehicles which do not have a ramp, or when using an old (York 4) stretcher. The branch is very concerned about this issue, which presents an obvious, continuing risk to staff. Talks are ongoing with both the Health and Safety Executive and management. Meanwhile please remember that you should carry out a T.I.L.E. risk assessment before lifting any patient, and should call for back up if you feel unsure.

POLICY REVIEWS - We are working closely with management in the review and amalgamation of policies and procedures across the trust. We hope to bring you up to date on some of this work in the next edition.

There are many other matters currently being given attention by the branch. Don't forget that if you would like to raise something that affects you, please can get in touch with your local representative or sector secretary. Alternatively, you can send your comments to us via www.swamb.com

Unsocially Acceptable?

Talks regarding the issue of unsocial hours pay were underway again at a meeting held on 17th September. Our Branch Chairman Ian Hopkins was at the meeting, which involved staff-side representatives and NHS Employers.

Reflecting feedback from our members, we made it clear that now was not the time to meddle with the issue of unsocial pay. Ambulance management agreed that the timing of such changes would cause problems, when combined with the other changes that the Ambulance Services are undergoing.

For more information on the whole issue of unsocial hours proposals, refer to issue 5 of The Grapevine. You can download a copy from the archive pages of www.swamb.com

BECOME A UNISON MEMBER

Get your voice heard, and benefit from the support offered by one of Britain's most powerful unions. Plus you get a wide range of benefits and deals on things like holidays and insurance. But the benefits of a union relies on the strength and motivation of its membership. **To join us, just visit www.swamb.com - or speak to your local representative.**

FAQ: Accidents at Work

Frequently Asked Questions — Another grapevine exclusive guide to what you need to know

What's the first thing I should do if I have an accident at work?

The first thing you need to do is consider your own safety, and to assess whether you are fit to continue working or not. Then you should report the accident as soon as possible. You must fill out an Adverse Incident Form. Management are obliged to keep a register of such accidents, and they cannot do this unless you report it.

Who says they have to keep track of these things?

The Law. There is something we like to call RIDDOR (which is an acronym for The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995).

What if I can't come to work because of my accident?

If you have injured yourself and genuinely don't feel you are fit to work, then don't. If it's going to be for more than a seven days you need to consult a doctor. You are entitled to sick pay, and the amount and duration of the sick pay you receive is depends on your length of service. If you are unfortunate enough to be absent from work long enough to have your pay reduced to 50% then you can claim something called Temporary Injury Allowance. The trust has to make an application for this benefit on your behalf and will send you a form to fill in. It is very important that you get in touch with a UNISON at this stage, who can help you with advice on how to complete the form.

But if I go sick, won't it be held against me in future?

Remember that if your accident happened as a result of your duties at work, then management will keep any resulting absence on record, but should not hold that particular absence against you when it comes to promotion, etc.

Am I entitled to anything else?

UNISON offer a payment to members who injure themselves through no fault of their own in the undertaking of work duties. The amount depends on how long you are unable to work for.

Always remember, as a unison member, you could be are entitled to financial help, support, general advice and legal advice. So although we hope you never find yourself in this situation, you should get in touch if you do.

“...I have to say that UNISON have been fantastic every step of the way in the support and advice they gave me since I injured myself at work”

- a comment from a member of our branch, stationed in Dorset

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www.swamb.com

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A number of issues raised by members in Dorset have been taken forward by representatives to the UNISON branch executive, and to management.

A meeting was held on 4th September in Lythett Matravers, near Poole. It coincided with a barbecue provided by the branch for retired and current members. There was a large array of food and drink provided, and the retired members enjoyed the chance to get together. There was a relaxed feel to the meeting, which was punctuated by frequent visits to the barbecue. Despite a generally low turnout, there was a refreshingly strong representation from PTS members, and a number of important matters were raised and discussed by those who were there. As promised to our members, these issues were then taken to the Branch Executive, which met in Taunton the very next day. The issues were discussed with the executive members and received a good show of interest and support.

The next stage was to take the concerns to management. The Local Consultative Committee (LCC) took place at East Division Headquarters on Friday 7th September. The LCC was established as a result of calls by UNISON members for better consultation. Issues passed on and discussed at the meeting included:

Meal Breaks: There is a very mixed viewpoint among union members on meal break arrangements, but one thing is clear: Staff are legally entitled to have a break, completed before the sixth hour of their shift. The meal break agreement in Dorset is a compromise, catering for a range of opinions, but the branch feel that the spirit of the agreement isn't always being adhered to. We felt that our views on this matter were listened to and taken seriously by management. The result of discussion on this immensely complicated issue resulted in the establishment of a working group to meet as a matter of urgency. We will keep you updated on the outcome of this.

PTS Communication Problems: PTS members were concerned about not being able to contact control. We were assured that more staff are being put into the control room and we were told that a new phone line should help alleviate this problem. Management also assured us that a new PTS radio system will be a priority.

PTS Meal Breaks: We raised the concern with management that PTS planning is an ongoing issue and stated that PTS crews must not have their right to a meal break compromised.

Non-Ramped Vehicles: Vehicles without appropriate ramps have been somewhat pervasive in Dorset, and the vehicle replacement programme has not yet seen these vehicles withdrawn from service despite previous assurances. We reflected the increasing loss of patience among of our members, stating that the lifting and handling made necessary by such vehicles is considered unsafe. It was explained to us that there had been unforeseen delays in the replacement programme elsewhere in the west of the trust. We were assured that these issues were being resolved, and that the non-ramped vehicles in Dorset would soon be replaced by Renault vehicles fitted with ramps. In the event of any further delay, the branch will take this matter back to the Health and Safety Executive.

Problems with Vehicle Safety check regime: There was discussion about the safety check procedure currently conducted on vehicles. Some issues on this subject were clarified by fleet management. Concerns remain over the haphazard procedure for getting vehicles to their safety check. There is clearly an issue with the lack of properly equipped spare vehicles. The branch will fully support an audit of equipment throughout all stations in Dorset, with the assurance that this will help in the purchase and placement of equipment onto spare vehicles.

The LCC meeting was productive, lively and amicable. Our branch representatives came away with a positive feeling about it. UNISON Chairman Alan Lofthouse said:

"We hope to be entering a period where consultation and working in partnership is taken seriously and works for both staff and patients. I would urge members to keep bringing us their concerns to us and we will try to do our hardest to resolve them".

There is encouraging scope for the concerns of our members to be addressed and resolved, and we now hope that management will honour their commitment to working and communicating with us on such issues.

If you would like more UNISON involvement in your sector, or would like to attend a sector meeting, please contact your Sector Secretary. Contact details can be found on the front page of The Grapevine.

Your views, comments and feedback on any issue to do with the union or this publication are always welcome. Speak to your nearest representative, or visit www.swamb.com

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