

Minutes
UNISON South Western Ambulance Branch
Dorset Sector Meeting
Tuesday 4th December 2007 at The Courtyard Centre, Lytchett Minster,
20:00 hrs

Present

Alan Lofthouse (AL) - Chair
Russell Fox (TP) - Minutes
Gordon Bailey(GB) – Branch H&S officer
Carl Drury-Hemsworth (CDH)
Tamsin Perkins
Elaine Mutter
Vikki Tomalin (VT)
Robin Gwinnett
Mike Dillon
David Measom
Howard Gladdon (HG)
Brian Smith
Kerry Newman
Kim Holland
Peter Butcher (PB)
Matt Smith (MS)
Phil Bartlett

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from the following people:

David Hunt
Graham Bemington
Chris Holland

2. Chair's Welcome

2.1 AL welcomed everyone and thanked them for a good turnout. He explained that issues raised at the meeting were to be taken directly to the Union branch executive in Taunton the following day.

3. Department/Area Reports

3.1 PTS representatives raised the issue of York 4 trolleybeds still in use on PTS vehicles. It was explained by AL that this was an issue which has already been raised by the union, and assurances that the withdrawal of these trolleys had not yet happened despite assurances. **Action: AL to take this matter back to the Local Consultative Committee (LCC) meeting on 10th December.**

3.2 The issue of frustration over Uniform issue was raised. During discussions that followed, there was concern over the issuing of only 2 green shirts per member of staff. Members said they felt that the resulting mis-match of uniform colours and styles would look untidy and present a poor image to the public. It was felt that the pride staff feel in the way they represent the trust does not always seem to match the emphasis that the trust itself places on such matters. **ACTION: AL will forward this view to management via the LCC**

4. Rest Breaks

4.1 All those present were asked for their views on the latest proposals presented in the National Ambulance Partnership Forum (NAPF) recommendations. These recommendations give the option of a 45 minutes or 1 hour of break outside paid working time. AL read through the key points of the proposal.

4.2 There was prolonged and detailed debate on this issue. Generally, those present felt that they would rather stay as they are – with the “interim Dorset policy”. It was stated that the trust would be looking to one policy across the trust, and would not allow for such stark “regional” variation. There was a feeling of frustration among members that a further half an hour (2nd break) might give rise to rota changes.

4.3 HG Mentioned the fact that many crews were often not receiving instructions from control to take their 2nd break. There was general consensus that this was also the case on other stations.

4.4 CDH Presented a list of options regarding rotas and owed hours, as well as details of a further suggestion regarding time in lieu and meal breaks.

4.5 A vote was proposed by AL as to whether those present would prefer 45 minutes of unpaid break or 1 hour of unpaid break. The vote was carried (8 to 0) in favour of the 45 minute option.

4.6 There was a sense that if the rest of the trust wanted to keep their current arrangement of 1 hour unpaid break, then the feelings of staff in Dorset might not carry any weight. This issue was addressed by AL, who said that he would take the feelings of Dorset staff to the Branch Executive in Taunton and that the branch would feed back the result of those discussions. **ACTION: AL**

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5. Pay Offer

5.1 AL discussed the recent pay offer, with an invitation from AL to ask any questions on points that people were uncertain about. There was a there was a brief discussion on the pay points (1-7) affected most by the offer, as well as some clarification on the money towards professional registration.

6. Health Safety Executive (HSE)

6.1 AL stated that he, along with Paul Short (Branch Lead on H&S), recently had the opportunity to meet with HSE inspectors. He gave details of a report which has been submitted to the HSE. He explained the Key points of the report, which among other important issues, included points as follows:

6.2 Under Reporting Of incidents – This is a problem, statistically even more so among staff in pay bands 1-3. All those present were asked to remind members that they must report ALL accidents and adverse incidents, and note them in the nearest available log book. A suggestion was made that paper copies of the incident report forms be placed on all vehicles. It was agreed that this was a particularly good idea.

6.3 Risk assessments & Chain of responsibility – Policies are in place but no training or adequate time is allocated to OLM's and CSO's to perform adequate risk assessments or H&S promotion.

6.4 Stress – The branch fears there may be increased stress placed on those staff who have to attend for the duration of a shift when working with E.C.A.'s

6.5 Complaints – Stress is also being caused by complaints and investigations are taking a long time to resolve. There is a feeling that HR Department are sometimes becoming involved in these procedures in a way in which they shouldn't.

6.6 Violence and aggression – New systems for response times will activate the nearest vehicle, before details of the incident are know. This could put lone workers at risk.

6.7 Stab vests – These are not being issued in the rest of the trust, which may have implications for Dorset staff.

6.8 manual handling Injuries – in 2006/07 these accounted for almost 50% of all reported incidents.

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6.9 There was general discussion on each of these points. Members were assured that the UNISON branch would continue to work closely with the HSE to ensure that they were aware of these concerns.

7. Vehicles & Stretchers

7.1 There was prolonged, heated discussion on the vehicle fleet currently in place in Dorset as an “emergency measure”. Many members reported similar problems – of vehicles seen as “worn out”, “barely road worthy” and in very poor condition, which members felt were embarrassing and very difficult to work on.

7.2 There was general agreement that staff had adopted a “bulldog spirit” to the trusts initial vehicle crisis, but that patience was now wearing thin. Complaints were made about what is seen as propaganda from the trust surrounding this issue, and members asked why there were no other options – such as leasing or “borrowing” from other trusts. **ACTION: AL assured members that the branch would forward all of these views to management at the LCC meeting on December 10th.**

7.3 Members were reminded that any back pain, injury or other adverse incident as a result of these vehicles should be reported.

8. A.O.B.

8.1. VT asked about the Christmas leave arrangements. It was explained that there had been problems with the leave issue which will be Raised at the LCC. **ACTION: AL to raise at the LCC**

8.2 GB asked for the sector’s support in seeking funding for a retired members Christmas event. Support was unanimously given.

8.3 PB asked about his boots.

9. Meeting Close

9.1 The meeting was closed at 22.25 by AL. RF and AL thanked everyone for coming and for their contribution, and assured those present that their views would be represented in a constructive way.

Date of next meeting: 26 February 2008.

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