

SOUTH WESTERN AMBULANCE BRANCH



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Ref: Proposed Changes to Protection Arrangements

Date: 12th July 2011

Email: alan@swamb.com

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Dear Sue,

I am writing in response to our last PPPG on 14th June 2011 at which we discussed protection arrangements under our Protection of Terms and Conditions Policy and the Agenda for Change Handbook.

You have proposed a change from our current 2 years full and 3 years marked time protection to 2 years full protection. You also proposed a change to the 4 year mileage protection under Agenda for Change to 1 year protection. This was detailed in a document which you circulated at the beginning of the meeting and which we are still waiting for an electronic version to circulate to our members.

At the meeting you stated that you were beginning a consultation with an implementation date of 1st September 2011. You asked us to respond to the consultation and this letter forms a response to this request.

You have stated that the proposed changes are not based on cost savings but have stated that the current system is inflexible to change. You stated in an email to myself requesting more information that;

"I am making arrangements to get the financial information that you have requested, although as this proposal is being made on the basis of being more reasonable and proportionate it has never been presented as a financial cost saving exercise for the Trust, the emphasis has been on developing more flexible working practices which enable the Trust to respond to service changes and where necessary enable a cushion for staff who have had their work location moved in order to make alternative arrangements."

To date we have received no financial information to enable us to hold a meaningful consultation. Please could you also elaborate on how you feel these proposed changes will be more reasonable and proportionate?

You also stated in the email that you would complete an EQIA which you would share with us. As we have not yet received this EQIA this also denies us the chance to have meaningful consultation. Further to this we would like to ask that if the changes are based on equality issues, and not cost savings, then this EQIA should be the first step in working through an equality based

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justification with which to shape future change. It is also important to complete this work in partnership with, rather than in isolation from, the recognised union.

We feel that whilst you might believe there is a justified reason for changing our protection arrangements these have not been clearly demonstrated or justified to the extent where we are prepared to reach agreement.

We believe that further exploratory work on protection agreements should commence, in partnership, to compare other ambulance trusts and local NHS Trusts in the South West. Once we know what is broadly comparable to our members then we can start to look at what our agreement should look like.

The current stance of the Trust to invoke a unilateral change to our collective agreements after a period of consultation will be challenged immediately. To avoid this confrontation I suggest that we engage in proper dialogue to agree a fit for purpose protection agreement which adequately safeguards staff from the effects of forced organisational change in the best interests of the Trust.

With regards to the Agenda for Change mileage protection we can respond as we did at the PPPG meeting. The mileage protection is afforded to staff under their current contract. This contract is negotiated nationally with the Staff Council. This must be where that agreement is changed as our mandate from our members is very clear; that they will not accept this agreement to be undermined through local negotiations and that they view this proposed change in the most cynical light as a product of becoming a Foundation Trust.

To help give confidence to staff in their employer and Foundation Trust status it would be beneficial to both sides to leave the national agreement in place.

“When the Trust is licensed as an NHS FT, all its employees will remain NHS staff and continue with their existing terms and conditions, with all their rights protected.” Appendix G – TU Recognition agreement.

We are committed to working in partnership with the Trust and this letter requests further dialogue and joint working to explore the needs of staff and Trust before changes are made.

Yours Sincerely

Alan Lofthouse
Branch Secretary
South Western Ambulance Branch
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Cc: UNISON Members

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