



Press Release

25 March 2009

UNISON Continues Firm Opposition To A Reduction In Ambulance Skills.

A proposal from the management of the East of England Ambulance Service aims to half the number of skilled professionals on an emergency ambulance. Plans to employ less-qualified support staff to replace clinically-trained staff in ambulances have been met with extreme concern from staff and union leaders.

Ambulances that are normally crewed by two clinically skilled clinicians are set to be downgraded to a single paramedic who would be supported by a non-clinically qualified assistant called an Ambulance Support Worker³ (ASW).

However, UNISON has always supported the important role and increased use of the Ambulance Support Worker when they are crewed together on intermediate tier vehicle and assigned to non-life threatening patients to reduce the already excessive pressure on A&E crews.

Branch Secretary Kevin Risley says;

“Our concerns over the ASW role are based on dangers that can occur during incidents where more than one person is injured, or in cases of serious injury or illness where a positive patient outcome will only be best achieved by the intervention of two highly trained clinicians.”

“ASW’s will have limited first aid training so it would be reasonable to concur that in incidents such as this, patient welfare would be at risk”.

The most recent update we have this week is that the East of England Ambulance Service is awaiting the results of a national pilot scheme before deciding whether or not to go ahead with any changes to the way ambulances are currently crewed. This means a pilot scheme due to be rolled out in Hertfordshire next month will not go ahead as originally planned. UNISON welcomes this course of action and urges a continuation of opposition from political allies.

Further statements will follow.

Ends.

Notes to editor:

¹ UNISON is Britain's biggest trade union with more than 1.3 million members. Members are people working in the public services, for private contractors providing public services and in the essential utilities. They include frontline staff working full or part time in local authorities, NHS, police service, colleges and schools, electricity, gas and water industries, transport and the voluntary sectors. Further information can be obtained from www.unison.org.uk

² The UNISON East of England Ambulance Branch (referred to as ‘the Branch’) exists to represent staff issues within this trust. This Branch exists to focus on the 2000 members within the East of England Ambulance Trust.

³ Ambulance Support Workers may also be referred to as Emergency Care Workers by some ambulance Trusts.