



# Branch Newsletter

April 2009  
Issue 25

## An open letter from the Branch Committee to–

Hayden Newton Chief Executive  
The East of England Ambulance Trust  
Regent House 110 Northgate Street  
Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP33 1HP.

Dear Hayden, 26th February 2009

We are writing this in an attempt to retrieve a situation which we feel is spiralling out of control.

We all know that following the “Bradley Report” and its recommendations, we merged from three Trusts into our current structure– but what do we actually have today ?

- Failure to amalgamate to one Trust.
- A disturbing level of disharmony amongst staff and all levels of management.
- An unacceptable number of departures by highly respected managers who have become disaffected by the failures of this Trust.
- Staff and Managers at all levels, working under intolerable pressure to achieve Call Connect Targets, that cause Patient Care to become secondary within the culture of the organisation.
- The pursuit and achievement of the Call Connect Targets becoming more important than Staff Welfare.
- Morale amongst all levels of Staff at the lowest point since just before the East Anglian Trust Public Inquiry that took place in 1998.
- Strong indications that Grievance and Discipline cases are on a steady increase.
- Occasions of staff members exploiting external Media channels are on the increase.

We feel it is essential to highlight the fact that many of the above issues would not have reached such a serious state, had the previously successful culture of partnership working prevailed. Examples where this success was demonstrated include;

- Agenda for Change (with East Anglia being only one of two Ambulance Trusts who acted as Early Implementer sites).
- Improving Working Lives
- C.H.I. Assessments.

Sadly the fabric of our partnership is disintegrating. This is best exemplified by the inexplicable mistrust the Board shows towards our staffside representatives, by their exclusion from Part 11 of the Board meetings. Our commitment is demonstrated by the fact that we are still involved in many partnership groups such as; Policy Harmonisation, and Job Evaluation which are doing some excellent work. Therefore before events reach an irretrievable state, we are seeking an urgent meeting with the Chair, The Chief Executive, and The Non Executive Directors, with a view to developing a way forward.

The East of England Ambulance branch Committee.  
CC Maria Ball Trust Chair - Paula Grayson Non Executive Director  
Jagtar Singh, Non Executive Director, Caroline Bailes Non Executive Dir  
Paul Remington Non Executive Director Phil Barlow Non Executive Dir

## Secretary's Corner



**The results** of the Annual Staff Survey as carried out by the Healthcare Commission has recently been released, and as far as this trust is concerned it makes pretty grim reading. On the 37 Key measures the Trust was worse than the average of other Ambulance trusts on 24, average on 11, and better than average on just two. Where the same question was asked in 2007, performance had generally got worse. Morale has fallen, and staff say they do not understand their roles and where they fit in.

Staff were more likely than average to say they were thinking about leaving, and just 6% said there was good communication between workers and senior management, compared with 10 % at other Ambulance trusts. Although this may all sound a bit bleak, it comes as no surprise to this Branch, as these were exactly the same points that we have raised with the management side consistently over the last year or so, and the report may have been more positive had our concerns been listened too.

The full document can be read by visiting our Website at [www.eeas-unison.com](http://www.eeas-unison.com)

In light of this and the current state of affairs within the trust, the Branch wrote an open letter to the Trust Board outlining our serious concerns on many issues, and inviting them to meet with us to discuss those concerns and seek improvements as to the Trust's forward direction, the full text of the letter can be read opposite.

Having discussed our correspondence at the Trust Board, we have received a response inviting us to meet with the Chief Executive and Trust Chair, we have replied by agreeing to attend a meeting with them, but also expressing our deepest disquiet that none of the Boards Non Executive directors felt the need to be involved in those discussions, when taking into account the gravity of the issues we raised. I will keep members informed as to the outcome of any debate.

Continued overleaf-

We have also issued the Trust with 2 Health and Safety improvement notices dated 18th February 2009. The first one was on the lack of Partnership Working in consulting and informing staffside Health and safety Officers of when serious incidents occur and a lack of commitment by the Management side on Health and safety issues in general. The second was on the matter of some staff within the Trust being issued with stab proof body protection and some not. The Health and Safety committee feel that an acceptable debate has been had, and a way forward has been agreed on the first issue, but that a satisfactory agreement has not been established to the second. Therefore the Health and Safety Committee will be informing the Health and Safety Executive of the situation and seeking arbitration from them on our behalf.

The work that was being undertaken by the Mealbreak Working Group appears to have ground to a halt, with little or no commitment from the management side to seek a solution to this highly contentious situation. Therefore the Collective Grievance that was taken out by crews in the Cambridgeshire area and held in abeyance pending the outcome of discussions by the group, will now be re-invoked, and formal procedures will commence.

The Dynamic Deployment (DD) trial came to an end at midnight on the 31st March 2009. Unfortunately DD is with us for the foreseeable future, as part of the trial produced considerable data that response times have improved significantly, and patients are being reached much more quickly. However, it is important to note that a very clear agreement was reached with the Interim Director of Operations at a meeting on 6th March that any response post of DAP that has not been signed off or meets the requirements as set out in the SOG will not be used, If staff are tasked to standby at any such point, they should politely make it known to HEOC in the first instance, that this is not an agreed site. If HEOC insist that you attend, then do so for 45 minutes, making note of the times, names and conversations, then at the first opportunity inform your line manager and local staffside representative that you wish to take out a Grievance using the Trusts formal procedures

The latest on the ECA/ ASW situation is that the Trust's management have finally agreed with the suggestion made by the Branch officers some months ago, which is to wait for the release of the National Pilot Report. We have yet to see the report and we will keep members informed of the details when they become available.

One slight bit of good news amongst the gloom is that we have finally managed to reach an agreement on the final version of the Technician JAQ. The next challenge will be arranging for an evaluation panel to get together, especially as we are considering asking for at least two Independent, external panellists to assist us this would be to ensure that the JAQ gets a fair and unbiased hearing.

As you all can see there is much going on and we need your support. Don't forget to vote in the local ballots for Branch Officers that will be arriving at home addresses shortly, and for regular updates of current situations, visit our website.

Kevin Risley Branch Secretary

In the Newsletter of March 2006 the former EAAT Branch submitted a response to the Official merger proposals, this went forward to form part of the overall Trust responses to the proposed merger. It can be found on our website at [eeas-unison.com](http://eeas-unison.com)

Have you been harassed when using services ?

## LGBT Members

Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual people are already protected from direct or indirect discrimination by service providers– such as being refused services or being charged more. They are also protected from harassment at work. But they are not explicitly protected from harassment by service providers.

Harassment is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating your dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for you.



We need to show that we need this legal protection, if you have been harassed by people providing services, please send in a brief summary, so we can present the evidence to government. All examples will be made completely anonymous. This could be Public services such as healthcare, housing, education, leisure, social services, police or criminal justice services. Or it could be services provided by private companies, or by voluntary or community groups.

**If its happened to you or your LGBT family or friends, let us know by e-mailing out@unison.co.uk**

Monthly LGBT electronic bulletin and OUT in the UNISON Newsletter.

You can sign yourself up for the monthly UNISON LGBT news bulletin at -

[WWW.unison.org.uk/out](http://WWW.unison.org.uk/out) for all the latest news and information .

June Felstead LGBT Officer EEAS Unison Branch

# ***This one calls for a fast response not an extended Urgent***

## **PTS Changes**



**Hi to all PTS**  
colleagues.

Some of you may be aware Ross Stanton stood down as our PTS Officer at the AGM in February, and as I have now taken on the role, I thought I had better introduce myself to those that don't know me.

My name is Carole Taylor and I have been in post as an ATA for 9 years, based at Wisbech.

I have been active within UNISON as a station rep and Norfolk Lead rep for a few years, and I am still continuing in these roles as well as taking up the PTS Officer role. I hope to carry on the good work Ross started, with improving the PTS profile within the trust, and helping colleagues. I personally would like to say a big 'thank you' to Ross for his time and effort, and especially for carving out an easier path for me to follow.

These are difficult times for lots of reasons, but my intentions are to ensure that your views, comments and constructive criticisms reach the ears of those that can change things for the good of patients' staff and trust alike. We can if we work together have a Patient Transport service second to none to be proud of, with a happy workforce.

What I would like to see is the whole of the East of England PTS singing from the same hymn sheet in terms of Policies, Procedures, and working practices, working well alongside our colleagues in the offices, and managers. I would like to say a thank you to all UNISON PTS reps and department contacts (new and old) for their past and future work within the union, and my mobile is always on for any problems or enquiries you may have (back of newsletter) please do not hesitate to phone me, if I can't help I know a few who can !! Just one more thing, we are short of UNISON PTS reps so if you don't fancy being an active rep, a department contact for your station, no matter how few work there, it would help to get views to management, and answers to enquiries promptly. I often hear "I didn't know that" so a department contact can really benefit some places by keeping you 'out' of the dark about issues, to eliminate the 'I didn't know virus' All we need is your name and workplace and life could be much easier for everyone. The branch will provide you with every assistance in your new role. Best finish now but please let's communicate.

EM Communications

**Why** has it taken yet another Survey to point out what 'good housekeeping should tell us ? The Branch, its Officers, have laboured the consequences of the obvious downturn in industrial relations for months, finally resulting in an open 'Letter to the Board' (on front page).

With the boardroom door barely ajar, we finally read in the press that the NHS National Survey evidence is once again on the table to back up what the branch has already been telling the Board of Directors and Senior management for over 12 months.

The annual NHS Staff Survey Watchdog report is back again to repeat the obvious; Quote- "The East of England Ambulance Service Trust did particularly poorly. On 37 key measures this Trust was worse than the average of the other ambulance trusts on 24, average on 11, and better than average on just 2. Where the same question was asked in 2007, the performance had got generally worse "There are it says, "real lessons to be learnt about, Leadership, management, and Teamwork. Communications with Senior management are poor, 52% of staff said the vehicles were not in a good state of repair.

In response to this latest report the Trust is quoted as saying, "The Trust will now put together an action plan to address key matters arising from these results to help improve working lives, as these can have a positive impact on patient care" Important though it is to look forward, there is a profound need to look back and ask WHY ? Repeated Surveys and reports from Acas and others, as far back as 19 years have clearly identified the same fundamental traits and problems associated particularly with the factions of the former Norfolk-Suffolk-Cambridge merged Service after 1994/5 For instance:- **Norfolk Acas Report/ Survey & Recommendations prior 1989- 1990 for admission to Trust Status. Result ( A poor report) It was critical of Management & Comms ( Yet still elevated to trust Status.)** **1997 Acas Surveys & Reports again for newly merged Suffolk- Norfolk & Cambridge again at Managerial /Communications, Merger problems were already surfacing. ( Re-organise/ Re-shuffle)** **EAAT An Assessment and Internal Staff Survey prior too an application for Investors in People. ( Result ) (The Trust was considered ('not ready to apply').**

**1997 Following an Internal Staff Survey, A Staff Support System was set up as well as proposals for a Work based Training scheme. ( Both plugging the holes in an ailing system.)**

**At 1998 (A vote of 'No confidence from the control room) followed by a Inquiry Report more Surveys & recommendations. (This time there were Major management problems & reshuffles.)**

**1999 Meanwhile Fitch & Co Associates are commissioned to do an Operational review report for EAAT and the A & E Consortium. Page 15- IV said- "The barriers to the efficient management of Key business are enormous, with deeply dug foundations. If they are to be removed, highly focused operations management will be required."** **(Re-organised / Reshuffled)**

**A revisit of the Inquiry report & its recommendations as recent as 2001, the results of its 14 recommendations are still to be found on the former EAAT stations.**

**The common denominators running through all these reports from 1990 are Leadership, Management problems as well as Communications. Grudgingly it was accepted that more money was needed to support that merger. At 1999 it was said that Directors were not visible enough throughout the Trust, have they been any more visible since ? The staff evidently do not think so.**

The evidence is well documented, merged factions of EAAT have had a catalogue of Independent Advisory visits and surveys including the very Public Inquiry of 1998 and its re-visit at 2001.

Its time to accept the history, reshuffling and re-labelling is not the answer. Confronting the underlying issues openly might be a start. There are issues of complete disassociation, never mind teamwork or leadership. A culture prevails of being overly receptive to career enhancing statements, rather than to dig deeper, get out there and scrutinise for the reality. In defence of management, this time its all clouded with political stimuli of target mind -games. Without doubt the actions of management top down to team leader show great difficulty with staff in defending the Target Policy. On a daily basis other sections of the NHS to which the Ambulance service is semi-reliant for its own results, are also being depicted by Health Minister Alan Johnson as "systemic Managerial failure" amazingly there still exists the mad scramble for prestigious foundation Trust status. Crews no longer expect to be in residence on stations as before, but they do expect to transparently see the advantages of the newly installed systems, and rightfully expect their Managers/Team leaders to be in a position of voicing confidence in those systems also. In tandem with HEOC they experience inexplicable duplication of resource, the promised alternative pathways not open to them, and the constant frustration of factors way beyond their control. Ambulance services have fairly quickly become the central disposal point for social failures, funding failure, and now the butt of the Target system. In concert with the recent survey, most crews would 'box tic' that the nearest they get to being 'people managed' is when they go through the Training Dept; with few exceptions its a paper managerial system over reliant on self discipline with minimal contact. If asked, they would expect to be managed by proven managers, not by a target system which is being adopted, and solely relied on as a crude substitute for managing people. The question still begs the answer, fully aware of the history; **Why is it the Chairman and Non Executives, the government appointees, working as guardians of the Trust had to wait for a survey in 2007 to tell them we were weak, and then another survey at 2009 to record that things have only got worse. ?**

# April 2009 main news Updates

## Retired Members



When UNISON members retire they are offered the opportunity to remain with their union as a 'retired member' (defined as those who have taken up the lifetime membership option). This particular membership allows retired members to continue accessing all but a few of the normal range of benefits available to their employed UNISON colleagues.

However it should be noted that this option only applies if the member maintains their retired status or in other words, does not return to paid employment of any kind with this or any other employer. In the event of a return to paid work, retired members who wish to continue their union membership must notify the branch without delay and start paying monthly subscriptions again, (calculated as appropriate to their new salary) in the same way as they did pre-retirement.

Although it is becoming increasingly commonplace to return to work with the organisation-albeit often in an alternative role, most of this branch's retired members to date have 'fallen beneath the radar', thus remaining unaware of the need to return to full membership status or risk losing out in the event that they require support and / or assistance upon their return to the workplace. Therefore if you have just returned to paid employment and have not yet updated your membership status, please contact Ian Mc Kenna the Retired members Officer or Stuart Reeves Membership Officer- and /or Jackie Robinson Divisional Secretary & all round "do it yourself" person' at the earliest opportunity to resolve this matter.

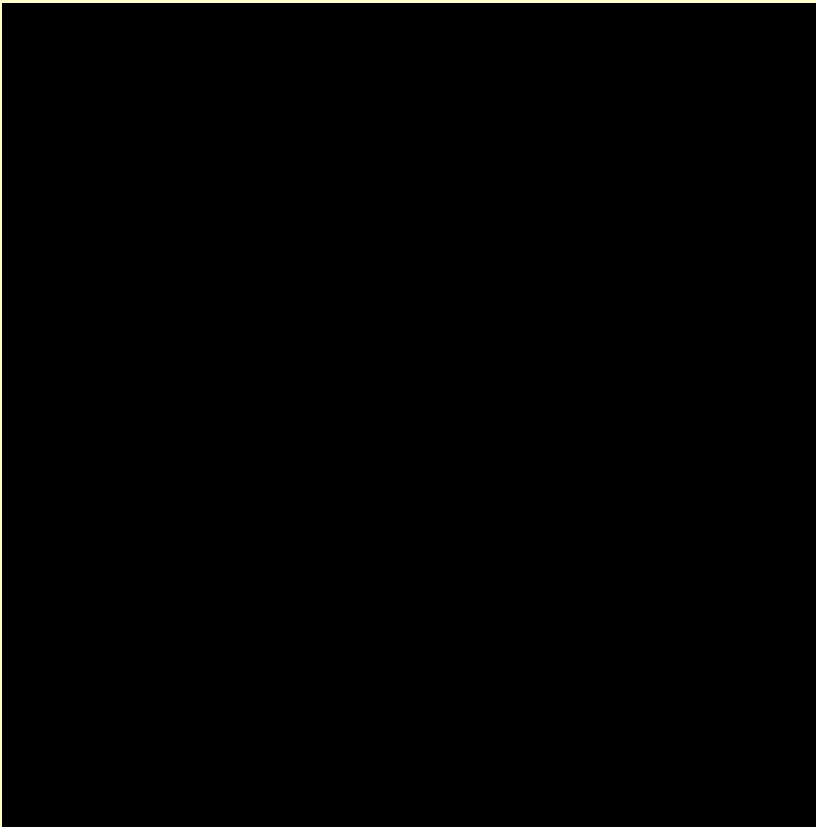
Ian Mc Kenna [ian.mckenna@eastamb.nhs.uk](mailto:ian.mckenna@eastamb.nhs.uk) (07870544241)

Stuart Reeves [sreeves@eeas-unison.com](mailto:sreeves@eeas-unison.com) (07772479434)

Jackie Robinson [Jackie.robinson2@nhs.net](mailto:Jackie.robinson2@nhs.net) (07890357493)

## Branch Contact Details

Our branch website provides the most up-to-date information on UNISON's work within the Trust. Visit it at [www.eeas-unison.com](http://www.eeas-unison.com)



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## Mealbreaks

No meetings have taken place to further the progress. It was discussed at the Branch Committee on the 24th March, and decided that due to the delay, the current Collective Grievance held in abeyance from Cambridge will therefore go ahead to the next stage. Also see Secretary's Corner Pg2

## Deployment Plans Conclusions to date



As previously stated the Dynamic deployment Plan, trial, and consultation period concluded at the 31st March. There has been a significant increase in the number of sites that have been agreed and signed off. There are also others not as yet agreed, or deemed fit for the purpose. Please see the advice from Kevin Risley in this Newsletter Secretary's Corner Page 2

Lightfoot will continue to monitor progress, also further Questions & Answers will continue to follow. Thanks should be extended to both Staffside Representatives and managers that have worked extremely hard to achieve the results they have so far.

E M Comms

## Pensions

All members please be aware that there will be a NEW PENSION scheme starting soon and you will have the opportunity to look at both schemes to see whether you want to change to the NEW pension scheme or not. I have available, books for the NEW scheme, as well as updated old ones. Anyone starting in the Ambulance Service from April 2009 will automatically start on the new Pension Scheme, but those before will be on the OLD pension. You have 12 months to decide to change to the NEW PENSION scheme or not. If you feel that you would benefit from this. If you have any queries on the PENSIONS situation, PLEASE call me on the number on this page, my e-mail is there also. Regards Ian Mc Kenna.

## Staff Reps Nominations.

Have you nominated your Station/ Department Representative yet?

Nominations are now well overdue for these posts for the year 2009.

Please consider standing again as Rep, or finding a committed person within your workplace who is prepared to act as a contact to do so. Full training is provided with paid time off to enable your own full involvement at the negotiating table.

I have had several returns, but bear in mind there are 124 workplace sites to cover. !! Please Contact your Branch Secretary K Risley

## Annual Leave Review -ongoing.



This document is to be reviewed from 1st January 2009, for consistency of administration, and amounts of leave outstanding. Do you have any feedback on your own experiences of the Annual leave Policy over the last year ?

Please feel free to contact Barry Jarvis or the Annual Leave W/ group at any time if you are unclear about any issues, or feel that you have any ideas to which could be incorporated into any review which would be to the advantage of all staff employed at the Trust.

E.M. Comms