



Branch Newsletter

August 2009
Issue No 29

Branch Development Event 2009



The Annual Branch Development Plan / Audit took place in Mildenhall recently and proved to be a success, as it allowed us to carry out an audit of current practices, assess what improvements were needed, and to develop a strategy for achieving these goals.

The event was successfully coordinated and presented by the UNISON Regional Organiser, Cheryl Godber who is based at the Bury St Edmunds Office. The event was well attended by the majority of the Branch Committee, as well as the Regional Officer John Toomey.

We were greatly encouraged by way of team building exercises, and workshops, to consider the particular strengths and weaknesses this branch has when set against 'key performance indicators.' We considered where we are as a branch in the present day, compared to where/ how we see it being in the future.

It was interesting to see how the different branch officers perceived the Branch's success, and also the members perception of how we as a committee perform on their behalf. We also agreed that when applying timescales for achieving action point success, they need to be realistically challenging, as opposed to setting ourselves up to fail. There's not enough space to set out the entire audit document in this article, but as an example; communication was an obvious area for discussion, and although it was generally accepted that our communication mediums, (Newsletters / Website) have improved significantly over the past few years, one area that would benefit from improvement is the quality of communication between Staffside Leads, the Committee, and the County / Local Representatives. Overall it was an interesting and beneficial exercise, but as they say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, so lets get this strategy off the page and into practice ... less talking, more walking ? !!!

Jackie Robinson

EEAT Executive Board - Question time ?

Dear Colleagues. Having received an increasing number of questions, and /or concerns from our Ambulance membership of late, we have sent the following letter to the Trust Board for comment. We will provide you with an update as regards their response to its contents as and/ or when we receive one from them. So, it just remains for us to say, 'Thank you' for communicating your concerns, and "Watch this Space"...

To - The East of England Ambulance Trust Board
C/o Maria Ball- Trust Chair
Regent House 110 Northgate Street
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk IP33 1HP

Dated 21st July 2009

Dear Colleagues

We write to draw your attention to the following questions that have been raised by UNISON members working for this Trust, who are increasingly concerned and frustrated by the current state of affairs within the organisation.

Following this years Staff Survey results which highlighted that only 6% of staff felt that there was good communication between senior management and staff, alongside discussions that have since taken place agreeing that improvements are needed in this area, the following questions are set out below in their unadulterated form, and we would look to you to provide a response to your employees.

In the interest of fairness, and to stimulate a good discussion, we are happy to publish your answers with equal prominence in our next edition of the newsletter, so your early response would be greatly appreciated.

Q Do any of our senior managers read our newsletter, and if so, do they have any answers to the issues we raise ?

Q Why is our Chief Executive spending time in London advising on the potential flu epidemic, when our Trust is struggling with targets and going down the pan ? Surely all his attention should be focused here ? Weren't we told a while ago in 'Focus East' that Oskan Edwardson was seconded to carry out this very role ?

Q Why have our Directors posts been advertised in the 12th July issue of the Sunday Times ? Aren't the ones we have at the moment any good, or are we going to have more ? Doesn't this restructure process, place current post holders at risk, in which case aren't the trust breaching their own Change Management, Redundancy and Deployment policy ? How much is it going to cost the trust to carry out this exercise ?

Q Is it true that the Trust is spending hundreds of thousands, if not millions, on management reorganisation ! Surely that cannot be the case when we need more road staff and vehicles on the A & E side of our work ?

We are consistently told that the trust cannot afford to resolve matters such as Annual Leave and Meal Breaks, but seem willing the throw unlimited amounts of cash at re-organisation without a second thought ?

Q Is it correct that the Trust has spent 1.5 million on upgrading the Beds and Herts Control Room and it has been a total ‘cock up’ ?

What is going to happen to the Beds and Herts control Room now ?

Q How much money is the trust spending this year on Voluntary and private Ambulance Suppliers because of our failure to be able to reach our targets ? This practice is helping them grow and improving their chances of winning contracts from us when they come up for grabs. Or is that the real reason for giving them the work ?

Q Why am I not able to book the annual leave I want over the Christmas period ? I thought that the policy states, there will be a 75% leave limit for allocation this year ?

Surely an agreement has been reached by now— 7 months into the year. Isn’t that enough time for something this important ?

I don’t see how there can be a problem over Christmas, as we get a full allocation during the summer, and we have just been told that it has been busier than any other time, it does not make sense to me ?

Q How can the Trust seriously justify instructing, not yet qualified Student Ambulance Paramedics to crew up with clinicians over the weekend period 17th– 19th July 2009 in order to cover the shortfall in resource levels and provide a safe level of cover ?

What was the reason for this unsafe level of cover ?

How is it that the East of England Ambulance Trust appears unable to provide and /or maintain a safe level of cover if we supposedly have so many new staff in the system ?

Q Where are all the new staff that we have been told have arrived, or are on their way, because we certainly haven’t noticed them out on the road ?

Regards

The East of England Ambulance UNISON Branch membership.

Serious difficulties

The Ambulance service union UNISON has demanded an immediate Inquiry into the use of Student Paramedics on Front–line Ambulances by the East Of England Ambulance Trust last Friday and Saturday.

UNISON say’s that the decision by Ambulance Trust bosses to ‘volunteer’ the Students, had stunned Ambulance staff across the region. It was known that some students had refused to take the risk, and that a number of senior managers had objected to the move ‘in the strongest possible terms,’ even refusing to work with the inexperienced students. This represents yet another move by the trust to reduce the numbers of qualified staff on all its ambulances.

It was further revealed that, while Ambulance bosses were willing to interrupt the studies of student paramedics this weekend, a number of other student paramedics were already the subject of disciplinary proceedings for not sufficiently completing their studies.

UNISON say’s that a full inquiry into the Trust actions is needed because last weekend was not in any way exceptional, and if the Trust cannot put qualified crews on Ambulances now, then very shortly, with onset of summer pressures and the Swine flue Pandemic, the service will simply not cope.

The Union says that it simply cannot understand why, after three years, and the injection of millions of pounds, the Trust is in such disarray. UNISON questions why, after three years, the Trust has just re-advertised all of its top Director posts ? It says that this is a clear indication that the trust is in serious difficulty, and highlights the need for a “Full Inquiry.”

UNISON Press Release John Toomey Regional Officer

UNISON Officers Branch Officer Listing 2009

Please note where a Branch Officer has taken on other roles these are also listed below

Chairperson	Ross Stanton	07733225887	ross.stanton@eastamb.nhs.uk zolaisgod@hotmail.co.uk
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Disabled Members & Norfolk County H & S lead	Dave Edwards	07884327916	dave.edwards@eastamb.nhs.uk redfire@googlemail.com
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LGBT Members Herts County H & S Lead	June Felstead	07903585081	june.felstead@ntworld.com felstead@bhamb.nhs.uk
Womens Officer Job Shared with	Carole Taylor NSC Lesley Hilton BHE	07745549287 07989786661	carole.taylor@eastamb.nhs.uk lesley.hilton@sky.com
Beds County lead Rep	Lesley Hilton	07989786661	Lesley.hilton@sky.com
Cambs County Lead Rep also Life-long Learning Rep	Tim Killick	07730703569	tkillick@eeas-unison.com
Essex County Lead Rep	John Davey	07713259924	johndavey@essexamb.nhs.uk
Suffolk County lead Rep	Tim Ingall	07920442315	tim@driftway.plus.com
Essex County H & S lead	Peter Kelly		peter.kelly@essexamb.nhs.uk Peter.kelly@talktalk.net
Beds County H & S lead	Vacant		
Suffolk County H & S lead	Vacant		

Note- Please inform Communications if your details change in any way at all.



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June retires



This month we are bidding a fond farewell to one of our long term branch officers and activists, June Felstead, as she escapes (oops sorry) that should have been, retires from the East of England Ambulance Trust, and consequently, this branch as well. Having said that, we'd like to think that June will sign up for Unison's 'lifetime membership' which is offered to retiring members to continue enjoying the benefits of belonging to UNISON.

June has been an active part of UNISON for many years, and has been a great source of support to me throughout my time as Branch Secretary in the old BHAPS days. In her time as a local representative and Branch Officer (for both BHAPS and EOE branches)) June has been proactively involved in providing advice and support for members and staff alike in matters such as Health & Safety, Welfare, employment rights and policies. June could always be relied upon to make herself available to members needing representation for disciplinary or clinical related incidents.

In addition to all this, June took an active (and very vocal) role in key initiatives that have evolved over the years, including Improving Working lives, had it not been for her taking on the mantle of Staffside lead during the implementation of Agenda for Change , who knows what kind of mischief the management side might have tried to get away with. It has to be said that her firm but fair approach, unquestionable integrity, and superb pencil wagging skills kept Oskan, Les Clarke, et all in their places !

Whilst not a saint, she'd often swear and then claim she never used bad language before coming to work at WGC, and was obsessive about workplace /desk tidiness. I think its fair to say that June was a 'Top Bird' and I have yet to find anyone who has ever had a bad word to say about her. I'm certain that she will be missed by a great many friends, colleagues and members alike so, on behalf of them all-

"Enjoy your retirement June, you deserve it"

Jackie Robinson

Formal Dispute on Skill mix

At the 24th July the Branch was left with no option but to table a Formal Dispute in relation to the Trust's –

“Failure to consult with a recognised Trade Union, prior to the commencement of utilizing Student Ambulance Paramedics who are still in training on Frontline Ambulances”

End