



Branch Newsletter

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Trust Breach of the 'Time off' and facilities agreement

An important message to our members in Cambridgeshire from the local A & E Representatives

Some of you may have experienced problems over the last few months in gaining access to the services of an A & E Representative.

We reassure you all that the Representatives in Cambridgeshire are still working tirelessly on your behalf but our work has been made unsustainable by the refusal by management to release Representatives.

Recently there have been numerous incidences of refusals to release Representatives from their roistered duties to attend :-

- Meetings with members.
- Accompany members at Grievances, Disciplinary or Sickness meetings.
- Attend meetings with management.
- Carry out other duties expected of them in supporting members interests.

This is a clear breach of both legislation and our own trust policies.

The situation has led to Representatives attending meetings on their 'rest days' whilst on annual leave, and even when off sick. As a consequence the Representatives of Cambridgeshire have reluctantly been forced to take the following action.

- We have withdrawn all goodwill, and will not attend meetings with management until we see the evidence of the trust granting us the 'time off' which we are entitled to.
This means that we will not be coming in at times when we shouldn't be at work, and will only carry out Union duties during our roistered working time, in line with the Trade Union Legislation.
- Rest assured that we will still be at the other end of the telephone should you need advice and help, and obviously available to talk to whilst we are at work. The exploitation of the goodwill and flexibility of the Representatives must stop.
- In the interim period whilst these issues are addressed members are advised that they are still entitled to Union Representation. More so, if a Representative is unavailable due to a refusal by management to release them, then the member is advised to insist that the meeting be re-scheduled for at time when their Representative can be released. If you are in any doubt over this then PLEASE contact a Representative for advice as a refusal to allow Union representation can in itself be unlawful.

We trust we have your understanding and support for these actions, and that you appreciate that the Branch Committee is taking urgent steps to address this illegal and disruptive practice and seek resolution via the Staff Partnership Forum.

Thank you for your forbearance in this matter. The UNISON Representatives of Cambridgeshire.

All substance with an ability to cold scan an A 4 draft within minutes ..



Steve Beckley retires from Potter Heigham Ambulance Station at May this year, 'Geographic's as they are now, outside of the old EAAT the name will mean little to many people. After a short period in London, Steve continued his career with the Norfolk Ambulance Service mergers included, which has lasted some 30 years. Not an unusual span of service for staff in itself, except that Steve always made sure that he was involved inside the door when it came to decision making over the Terms and Conditions decided at service forums. In that respect few will realise that he has arguably done more to ensure the integrity of the process to improve the terms and conditions for both staff and managers, as well as improve the prospects for service delivery for patients than any other individual at that level over that period of time.

Firstly involved with the Union NUPE, with the Norfolk Ambulance branch, then again with the merger into UNISON also coinciding with the county mergers of Norfolk-Suffolk and Cambridge forming EAAT at 1995 and latterly with the East of England Ambulance Service in the status of Branch Treasurer.

It was stated in the first Norfolk Trust Status application brochure when referring to the engagement with staff, "It is believed that management does not hold the monopoly on ideas" he amply illustrated that statement over and over again. Always coming to the table prepared, he was all substance with a rare ability to cold scan several sheets of an A 4 draft within minutes, seeing though its flaws and proposing solutions with unerring accuracy.

Until Agenda for Change came along the 'Whitley Council' was the National bible for staff terms and conditions coupled with what was called 'Local Standing orders' to provide the local working flavour. Conversion to Trust Status implied that services would be capable of running their own ship in a more businesslike fashion, with Service policy being decided locally. In essence what actually happened post Trust status, was that service's policy still remained an amalgamation of ideas from around the country, exchanged and borrowed between services and cobbled together for best fit.

Before Personnel and Employment Law began to emerge, some of these policies left much to be desired, Steve set out to transform the poorly produced management drafts into positive workable policies, always with an eye to finalising something which was fair, workable, easily understood and administered. Without doubt all but a few managers (to include Chief Ambulance Officers and Chief Executives in that cadre) came to rely heavily on his ability to convert their efforts into something more acceptable and easily administered. At times managements impatience over his insistence on getting the detail and wording right to avoid problems further down the road, spilled over into threats of "enough time has been spent on this we need to get this one out there," but increasingly noticeable was that management also came to the table with a reliance on his finished article, which would be the one that always stood up to inspection, the workable one that more often took a bit longer but in the end created fewer problems, the credit of course rarely bestowed on his input that had produced it.

He commented to me somewhat wearily one day, "they just turn up to steal other peoples ideas and call them their own" but it did not however diminish his commitment both to the Union and Service in equal measure, it did though mean that his ability was seen as an underlying threat rather than an asset. One manager to whom himself always produced good quality documentation joked on one occasion, "I always enjoyed having Steve on the working party, just when we thought we had the finished article within our grasp, it was like having a retake of 'Colombo' Steve would ask the awkward question," he had long since seen the flaw but mischievously held back to the end to see if anybody else had spotted it as well.

All parties grew not only to rely heavily on, but also to respect his ability and input for the quality and fairness that it contained. As a Union Branch Officer he not only took part in the construction and negotiation of policy, but importantly made no bones about owning it, whether cornered in the crew room, the corridor, or outside A & E, he was not one to fudge around agreeing with the last person he spoke to, always more than happy to justify his involvement with the best achievable end result. Ready to listen, calculating, analytical, always forthright with an honest feisty humour, dependable as a sounding board, a trusted colleague and inevitably to be a branch treasurer.

Over thirty years commitment to essentially one service and Union, his principles were not up for sale, instrumental in much of the initial National as well as local Agenda for Change, able to converse at many levels, experienced in dealing with the transient flow across the top of ambulance services as well as at national forums. Those arriving at the table believing that they had already produced the panacea for the 'rubber stamp' soon found out their homework badly lacked research, they were only at draft one.

Whether Union or Management each and every forum was dealt with on its merits, respect and ability as far as he was concerned did not arrive automatically with the braid or the label, both needed to be seen to have been properly and manifestly earned. His colleagues will miss his loyalty, the Service the loser from his input and common sense, and the UNISON branch will undeniably be the poorer.

We wish him and his family a Happy and Healthy Retirement. E.M Communications.



At the time of going to print the General election had not been held, by the time you sit down to read this we will probably know whether the colour of the party now governing the country is red, blue, yellow or a combination of all three, (possibly even green or purple).

I hope that everyone used their vote wisely as there can be very little complaint as to who holds the balance of power if the effort wasn't made to cast your own vote; same applies to any ballot really.

Although not everyone's cup of tea, I found the televised prime ministerial debates fascinating, and they certainly seemed to add a whole new dynamic to the face of British politics, but despite all the hype and razzmatazz the one thing that didn't seem to change was getting a potential Prime minister to admit what it is they would actually do if they got into power. All three of the candidates were happy on the one hand to state that they would protect frontline NHS services whilst on the other hand talking about billions of pounds in "efficiency savings". Where will these efficiency savings come from? There is a potential that millions of pounds could be cut from the budget allocated to this trust, consequently those savings cannot be made by reducing paperclips or photocopying, these are the big numbers that could well involve 'pay freezes,' reductions in recruitment, or do I even dare mention the dreaded 'R' word. At the moment nobody has any idea of the reality, but you can bet your last meal break that it will be painful, nothing can be ruled out. It would seem that there is a view that the private sector has borne the brunt of the recession so far and now it is the turn of the public sector to bail the country out of the mess created by the greedy poorly managed banks, that is quite simply wrong and unfair, that is why it is important now more than ever that we have a strong union that campaigns, fights and lobbies on behalf of the millions of hard working staff employed by the NHS. That is why we need a solid membership that is prepared to step up, get involved and support the Union in that fight. That is why every member of staff should join UNISON today so that we can protect jobs, pay and the front-line services of tomorrow.

On the Technician Banding situation I met with Trust Managers D Donegan and T Leghorn to discuss the current position regarding this. A very open discussion was had and I gave robust representation as to the National JE process, and the need for the outcome of the recent Tech JE to follow that process, and go forward for the consistency and quality checking. Agreement was reached that the process will be followed and the next stage will take place within the next week or so I will keep members informed of progress.

Joining is very easy, go to our website at www.eeas-unison.com call UNISON DIRECT on 0845 355 0845 contact your local rep, or me, or our Branch Membership Officer, all contact details are on the back of this Newsletter. Do it now because you know you should.

K Risley Branch Secretary

UNISON Health Care Conference

At the UNISON Healthcare Conference held last month in Brighton, Composite Motion J outlined what our pay Policy will be for the coming year. Mike Jackson (UNISON Pay negotiator) in moving the composite motion acknowledged the political and economic challenges facing the NHS, but rejected the notion that Pay should be frozen and the defined benefit pension scheme should be scrapped. In fact he noted that the average NHS Pension is £5000 which can hardly be described as gold plated as some politicians would have you believe, (slightly less than the average MP claim for gardening !!)

He also noted that there was little or no appetite amongst senior managers or boards to move away from Agenda for Change and National Pay determination, and the Conference agreed to vigorously oppose calls for local or regional pay determination.

Key points of the strategy UNISON will be taking forward are:-

1. Defending and improving the UK wide national agreement
2. Maintenance of the value of existing pay scales at all levels
3. Reduction in the number of incremental points in long pay bands
4. Merger of pay Bands 1 and 2
5. Flat rate increase for all Pay Points up to 14
6. Continue to extend the national agreement to other providers of NHS services, to include GP Practices.
7. Progressive reduction in the standard working week
8. Defending the NHS Pension Scheme
9. Negotiate improvements in the subsistence rates
10. Conclude the review of 'on call'
11. Conclude the review of Recruitment & Retention payments.

Conference in re-affirming its support to the principle of independent review of pay through the NHS Pay Review Body process and in agreeing this focus, also called on the Service Group Executive to organise during 2010/11 among branches, regions and nations a high profile campaign in opposition to the Public Sector pay freeze and to begin preparatory work for a potential Industrial Action Ballot, including strike action, of all members covered by Agenda for Change. Any member who requires information on this or any other of the motions put before Conference should contact

Barry Jarvis or Jackie Robinson Branch Delegates in attendance.

From Sick notes

to fit notes

Last month, sick notes were signed off and replaced by a new 'fit note' scheme. The new notes will contain more information about an individual's ability to work, but what will the impact of the additional medical advice be?

From April 6th, GP's signing individuals off from their normal duties are invited to state whether the person may be fit for some work.

A person's GP is able to comment on what steps can be taken to help an employee to return to work, as well as what work that person could do.

A GP can comment on the impact of the individual's illness and recommend a phased return to work. Altered hours, amended duties, or adaptation to the workplace. Although the employer is not bound to follow the GP's advice, failure to do so will be relevant if an employee is forced into having to resolve any issues through a Tribunal.

However, the advice contained in a 'fit note' is time limited, it will not be 'live' for longer than 3 months after it has been issued. Where an individual is advised to go back to work part time, the financial consequences might be significant.

Statutory Sick Pay is unlikely to be due, so representatives should aim to arrange in advance, for the Employer to top up an individual's earnings.

The TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said "The new fit note arrangements will hopefully lead to more workers being given the support they need to return after an illness or injury" *Note- The above is a direct lift from the labour Research May Edition Volume 99 No 5.*

Where can I get more information and Support? Your Unison Regional Office will be able to provide advice regarding specific workplace cases, but there is also more general information available to all.

UNISON has produced a 'factsheet' for England & Wales on the whole issue, find that on unison.org.uk/file/fit%20notes%20january%202010.doc EM Communications

UNISON Branch Officer Listing 2010

Note—Confirmation of final Ballot results are still pending going to print.

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

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Treasurer Handover taking place from Steve Beckley 07765423849
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Norfolk & Suffolk

Divisional Sec Essex & Herts to Ballot John Davey or John Lee
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A Conference Visitors report

Health Conference Brighton 2010.

Hosted by Mary Locke a member of the Service Group Executive and Dave Godson UNISON National Campaign Officer.

I attended the 'Fringe Meeting' in my position as A.F.A., why? Because some time ago a similar NVQ was mentioned by our Trust for AFA's for the specialised work we carry out, not only on infection control, but also checking all Operational equipment on the Ambulances. This meeting was also to raise the profile of cleaners because it was felt without them/us Hospitals could not cope.

A Conference was held in 2009 by UNISON to try to get NVQ in place for the NHS Cleaners who do require specialist knowledge in this area, of deep cleaning in Hospitals.

One of the next steps being talked about is the British Standard Institute's standard of care for cleaning within the NHS.

Andy Burnham Health Secretary attended the conference earlier, and in his speech referred to how important front line staff are, and how these jobs would be protected, as if Cleaners and the lower band are less important, and the same thing is said by labour, every position statement make reference to 'front line staff.'

Many of the cleaners present were upset by this, as the questions from the floor demonstrated.

I do feel that this needs some further follow up by UNISON for similar support for the A.F.A.'s.

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Legal Help ?

Legal services are one of the Key reasons our members join UNISON. They want the reassurance of knowing that their union will provide high quality legal services when they need them, at no extra cost. But survey after survey has shown that many members are not yet aware of the full range of services available to them and their families. So it is vital that branches and reps have the information at their fingertips to make sure our members know the extent of UNISON's legal services and how to access them.

The Guide to Members Services is available from stockholders at— unison.co.uk or On –line at www.unison.org.uk.



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