

# Great Western Ambulance Branch

Branch Secretary – Miss J. Fowles  
10 Fernhurst Rd, St George Bristol

Branch Chairman – Mr I. Whittern  
11 Alverstoke, Whitchurch, Bristol BS14 0AE



[www.unison-greatwestern.co.uk](http://www.unison-greatwestern.co.uk)

Friday, 10 September 2010

Dear Mr Whiting,

This letter is designed to make you aware of some of our concerns regarding the A&E redesign project.

Although the Trust has held regular meetings with Unison representatives, to date, there has been no effective recognition of our concerns, or the many individual and collective concerns that were raised by our members during the one – one meetings, and at the station briefings. There have also been a number of inconsistencies from Trust representatives during the course of these meetings, which demonstrate a lack of strategic control of this project.

Examples include:

1. The recent staff briefings included a power point presentation which stated that many of the proposals had been agreed by JCNC representatives. We must make it absolutely clear that this Unison Branch **has not** ever agreed to any of these proposals, and we seek an immediate apology via the Chief's Weekly Brief for this serious error.
2. The Trust's continued assertion that staggered shifts are required for reasons of cover, to enable the meal break window to be staggered, and to increase the chances of staff finishing their shift at the correct time. If this is to be believed, please can you explain why it is proposed that 26 vehicles should start their shifts between 0700 and 0900 in Gloucestershire sector? This makes a mockery of the reasons that the Trust has given for staggered starts.
3. At a meeting at GTEC on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2010, Jonathan Lofthouse stated that he would look at the options that staff had suggested for retaining two 30 minute meal breaks in Avon Sector. One suggestion was that the first meal break would be taken at base station, and the second would be taken at a fully facilitated stand by location. This option would have negated the need for crews to be returned to their base station twice in a 12 hour period. It was this 'drive time' issue that, we were told, was the reason for a single meal break. However, during a meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2010, Tim Stockings stated that 'drive times' were not the issue; the issue was crews being unavailable twice during one shift. It appears that, after staff have shown willing to compromise, and have spent a lot of effort to find suitable alternatives, the goalposts have been moved. It now seems that whatever staff suggest, the default Trust position is to reject.

4. During the same meeting (13<sup>th</sup> August 2010), Jonathan Lofthouse stated that some staff would have to move teams or stations. He said that the number of staff affected would be very small. His exact quote was, "I will be surprised if it's double figures". This was again repeated at a further meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2010. However, at a meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2010, Jonathan said that it now appeared that approximately 30 staff would be affected. This type of inconsistency causes us and staff to lose confidence in those managers that are leading this project, and also causes us to speculate what other inconsistencies may yet come to light.
5. From the beginning of this project, the Trust has stated that 'Predictive Relief' would be abolished, and this stance was non-negotiable. There are several teams in Avon and Wiltshire who have worked this system successfully, and have done so for many years. These teams are very upset and angry that they may lose their 'Predictive Relief'. Therefore, it came as a bit of a surprise to all of us to hear Hayley Burchill state at a meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at Coleford station that she would put her 'pool relief staff' to work fixed days of each week. I think you will find that this is 'Predictive Relief' !!
6. At a meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2010, Jonathan Lofthouse told us that each team would be given six rotas for their consideration and would also be permitted access to the Ximes software in order to create further rotas if required. The only caveat to this would be that any rota produced must be 100% compliant with the recommendations made by Process Evolution. To date, we cannot find one team who has been given a rota, or who have been given the opportunity to use the Ximes software.
7. We are now just six weeks away from the proposed implementation date of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010, and yet the vast majority of staff across GWAS do not have any idea of what shifts they are expected to work. Please note that Agenda for Change states that staff should be made aware of their shifts six weeks in advance.
8. On 19<sup>th</sup> August 2010 we submitted a list of proposals for negotiation for the Trust. This was entitled, "UNISON Initial Proposals For A&E Redesign". Jonathan Lofthouse stated that he would consider these proposals and feedback to us. To date, we have received no feedback from any of the project managers.

These are just a few of our concerns and we would look to seek an urgent meeting with you in order to try and find a way forward. At this moment in time, we believe that the Trust is paying 'lip service' to our concerns and suggestions. What is more worrying, is, by ignoring us, you are ignoring the very staff that make GWAS work, and, who on a day to day basis perform beyond all expectation to treat patients and achieve targets.

This UNISON Branch is receiving an ever growing call from our members to ballot for industrial action. Neither this branch, nor its members, wants to reach

that stage. We want to continue to talk to the Trust, and to have **meaningful** negotiation talks. However, as the Trust continues to ignore the compromises and solutions offered by members and Branch Officers alike, we may have little option left.

As I am on annual leave until 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010, could you please reply to both Shane Clark (GWA UNISON Branch Welfare Officer), and Dan Tucker (GWA UNISON Branch Communications Officer).

Yours Sincerely,

*Jo Fowles*

Jo Fowles  
Branch secretary  
GWA UNISON Branch

For and on behalf of all GWA UNISON Branch Members, Stewards, and Officers.