

Key communications points – Ambulance Sector meeting 15th July 2010

1 New Sector Chairing team elected

Bryn Webster - Branch Secretary for the UNISON Yorkshire Ambulance Service Branch – was elected as Chair of the Sector for the 2010 – 2012 term of office. Bryn takes over from Joe Conaghan who chaired the sector from 2004. Clare Stoner – Branch Secretary from South East Coast Ambulance Service – was elected as Vice Chair for 2010 – 2012. Joe Conaghan will remain the Sector representative to the Health Service Group Executive.

2 Working groups set up

The Sector agreed a new remit and a work programme which sets out the tasks ahead for the next two years. To get as much work done as possible, a number of working groups have been set up.

Some of the groups will be populated by members of the sector, but others need reps with expertise in particular areas. If you are an accredited steward and have experience in PTS issues; Pensions; Private providers & community responders or Health & Safety, please let your sector rep know if you are interested in being put forward for membership of a working group.

A full list of the working groups, their remit and membership is available from your Sector representative.

3 Regional Round-up

Sector reps fed back key issues from their patches. Common themes included concern over the increase in PTS contracts going out of the NHS; remaining terms and conditions harmonisation issues following mergers; use of Bank Staff on Zero hours contracts; high levels of staff being reported to the HPC; workforce implications of introducing superstations; concerns about the impact of hospital closures; changes to the management of sickness absence.

4 NHS Pay, terms and conditions

The Sector received an update on the latest situation regarding Government pay policy. Sector members had a discussion on pay strategy which will inform the debate to be held at the Service Group Executive when it meets later in July. The Sector also received updates on key terms and conditions issues, including the forthcoming consultation on Mileage Rates; On-call harmonisation and changes to the handbook wording regarding Lease Cars.

5 Independent Safeguarding Authority/Protection of Vulnerable Groups

Gail Adams (who leads for the union on health regulation issues) attended the sector meeting to discuss the Government's plans to alter the implementation of the ISA/PVG schemes. The key message is that the opening of the register – previously planned for the end of July 2010 – has been suspended. Look out for more information from your branch.

6 Health and Safety

The Sector received briefings on a wide range of Health and Safety issues, including the recently announced review of Health and Safety legislation by Lord Young. Lord Young is on record as saying that he thinks that the emergency services should be exempt from the health and safety laws, and the Sector had an opportunity to discuss the potential impact of this proposal on members.

7 Health White Paper (England only)

The recently launched Health White Paper - liberating the NHS – was also under discussion. The proposals in the paper have far-reaching consequences, not just for the Ambulance Service but for the provision of NHS services in general. The proposals in the White Paper require legislative changes that will go before parliament and be voted on by all Westminster MPs. The Ambulance Sector will be involved in preparing UNISON's response to the consultation and members are urged to attend the briefings and organising meetings that regional health teams will be holding.

Ends