

UNISON: Supporting Southern Cross Members

This is a bulletin for all UNISON Members working for Southern Cross across the UK.

We know this is an exceptionally difficult time both for staff working for Southern Cross and its residents. We would like to update you on some of things UNISON is doing to deal with the problems the company is experiencing.

Given the speed at which the news from Southern Cross keeps changing it is important we share information with UNISON members quickly. Now more than ever is the time to be a member of a trade union. UNISON nationally is campaigning to save jobs in Southern Cross and demanding action from the Government.

UNISON has a substantial membership in Southern Cross. We have met senior management in the company to discuss the problems that it is currently experiencing and will be following this up with fur-



ther meetings to ensure that UNISON members' interests are represented.

We will make available whatever staffing, financial and legal resource is necessary to ensure that this is achieved.

Care home residents must be protected

UNISON, the UK's largest union, has warned that the huge uncertainty facing thousands of residents in Southern Cross homes poses a real danger to their health and wellbeing. Press reports have suggested that Southern Cross is seeking to close some of its care homes. The company says that no closure decisions have been taken. However, given their precarious financial position, closures remain a real possibility.

Research shows that if elderly people are moved when they are vulnerable, many do not live for very long afterwards. For elderly people with dementia, moving can also be incredibly confusing and distressing. There are also reports that the company is paying City firms huge amounts for crisis advice whilst cutting thousands of nursing and care jobs in its homes

Dave Prentis, UNISON General Secretary said:

"The events taking place around Southern Cross are truly shocking. This is a classic case of private sector

greed and the desire to make a quick buck taking precedence over the needs of the elderly and vulnerable in our society that have been entrusted to Southern Cross' care.

It should never have been possible for people to plunder Southern Cross' assets to make themselves millionaires. The consequences are there for all to see, the prospect of homes being closed, dedicated staff being thrown on the dole in a very difficult job market and the lives and well being of the residents being put at risk.

The government must step in to regulate the privatised care market. There are many other Southern Cross style companies out there, and this cannot be allowed to happen again."

If you learn that the care home you work at is potentially going to close please let your regional office know as a matter of urgency. "

Key questions on Southern Cross

What could happen to Southern Cross?

Southern Cross, has already said it plans to return 132 of its homes to landlords. The company wants to return 47 homes by the end of September, with the remaining 85 returned by 2016.

A number of Southern Cross' landlords had been threatening to take over management of other care homes. However, on 15th June a meeting between Southern Cross was followed by a joint statement which said: "We will work towards a consensual solution to the company's financial problems ... a process that will be overseen by a restructuring committee made up of representatives of landlords and Southern Cross"

Clearly, Southern Cross remains in a very weak financial position and so the transfer of homes and even insolvency cannot be ruled out. The situation is developing at a rapid pace and UNISON will do everything possible to keep you up to date with the latest developments.

What happens if responsibility for running the care home I work for is transferred from Southern Cross to another organisation?



If you are employed by Southern Cross, and if the landlord responsible for the care home you work in takes over the running of the home, you will be transferred to the new employer. If this is the case your terms and conditions will be protected. You will need to make sure you get in touch with UNISON as soon as you learn about this for support with the transfer process.

3000 jobs to be axed: UNISON Advice

We have learnt in recent weeks that 3000 jobs are to be axed across the UK in Southern Cross. The company is desperately trying to save some money and have announced that they are reducing the workforce by up to 10%.

If you have been notified that you are at risk of redundancy then you have certain rights including the right to request time off to look for a new job. You need to make sure you contact your local UNISON branch for support and assistance.

Why Join UNISON?

We need UNISON members to urge as many of their colleagues as possible who are not trade union members to join UNISON so that they can have their say. The more members in UNISON the stronger your campaign to save jobs will be.

Southern Cross staff can join in a variety of different ways:

- Online at www.unison.org.uk/join
- By telephone on 0845 355 0845
- Or by completing the form enclosed with

UNISON Direct Contact numbers

Call UNISONdirect on 0845 355 0845

Or freephone textphone 0800 0 967 968

Lines are open
6am-midnight
Monday-Friday
and 9am-4pm
Saturdays

