



ambulance emergency

UNISON
the public service union

Keep your promise to **ambulance staff**

Summary report on the findings of the Ambulance Emergency campaign survey

Last year the Government in England made a pay offer to ambulance staff to encourage them back to work following two four hour strikes and the potential for more strike action. It is now a year since the offer was proposed and although detailed discussions have taken place with employers, there has been little progress on the offer made.

UNISON circulated a survey to members in March 2016 in an attempt to capture views on three main areas. The impact of an increase in retirement age, views on increasing paramedic banding from five to six, and comments on what makes you proud to work in the ambulance service. Over 1300 responses were received and the ability to help others, saving lives and working alongside good colleagues were all reasons provided multiple times as reasons for being proud to work in the service. Some of the other comments made are below.

“Working for the institution of the NHS and all that embodies especially free health care, for all when needed. I am proud of how frontline staff and support staff manage the stress, demand and difficulties of the job. This is harder to do with changes to shifts and retirement age and almost stagnant pay”

“The job that I do personally, and the community of colleagues that look out for each other and do their best for every patient”

“Being able to help people in need. Making a real difference to people's lives”

Retirement age

We know that it is unreasonable to ask ambulance staff to work until they are 68 and this is echoed in responses received. Concern from members about the physical and mental impact that working longer will have on staff is evident, as is the worry about the effect that this will have on patient care. With over 95% of respondents willing to support a campaign against the increase in retirement age for ambulance staff, it is important this issue remains a strong focus in our ambulance emergency campaign. Over 1200 comments have been captured so far and below is a snapshot of some of the views expressed about the impact the increase in retirement age will mean to members.

“I am unlikely to be physically well enough to continue my job at retirement age”

“Inability to provide safe care to my patients”

“Muscular skeletal problems are a well known cause of having to reduce work or retire early, the nature of our job and wear and tear on our bodies is something that is not seriously considered enough”

Paramedic banding

93% of respondents would support a campaign for a change in paramedic banding from five to six. It is important to note that this support comes from members in varied roles including 97% of ambulance technicians happy to offer their support.

In our survey, we attempted to gauge attitudes towards industrial action, asking *“If no agreement is reached with employers regarding a change in banding for paramedics, would you be willing to support industrial action?”* Once again, the majority of respondents expressed their support and agreed they would be willing to take action. With such evidence of the strength of feeling amongst members, it is time employers and the government took action to progress discussions and stick to the promises made. Below, are some of the reasons provided explaining why paramedics should receive band 6 pay.

“They have a lot of responsibility and make life and death decisions on their own”

“Specialised skills and autonomous practise brings more risks”

“Extended skill set far beyond the current band 5 pay grade, increased operational pressures and ever reducing numbers of paramedics, band 6 could contribute to the number of leavers”

Percentage breakdown of responses received when asked, “If no agreement is reached with employers, would you be willing to support industrial action?”

Yes	85%
No	4%
Maybe	11%

Paramedics are leaving the profession at an alarming rate and the Government needs to take action now. 97% of respondents stated that they thought patient care would be affected when considering the rate at which paramedics are currently leaving the service. It is important that we continue to place pressure on decision makers in order to see this issue tackled.

Next steps

Our campaign survey allowed us to capture useful information on views held by members in the ambulance service. UNISON is now holding an indicative ballot of ambulance staff, over the government’s failure to deliver on promises made at the end of 2014/15 strike action.

All ambulance staff have been sent a link directly to the email address we have on record, so please keep an eye out for this. This ballot is for ALL UNISON members working in an English NHS Ambulance Service.

In order to send a very strong message we need to get a high return rate so your vote is really important.

You can find out more, and update your details on our ambulance emergency campaign page [here](#)

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