

Tony Crabtree
Acting Director of Workforce
London Ambulance

Eric Roberts
Branch Secretary
LAS UNISON

22nd July 2013

Dear Tony,

I apologise for the delay in responding to your letter that was attached to the email below dated 5th July 2013.

I will start first with A&E Support.

Notwithstanding the current issues surrounding the JEG National Handbook processes, matching/evaluating and the agreement of the Job Description (JD), I once again place on record UNISON's complete objection and opposition to staff at Band 3 skill level working with a Paramedic and fulfilling the full range of duties on a London Front-Line Ambulance.

We believe that this working arrangement with Band 3 skill levels puts the member of staff, the Paramedic and the patients at risk. Furthermore, to de-value and de-skill a London Front-Line Ambulance so that Government cuts are delivered is just wrong.

We urge you to review this strategy.

Rest/Meal Breaks

I would first like to clear up statements that we hear often from management side. This concerns staff being told that 'a rest break is not a meal break'.

This comes about, in my view, because of some managers (even some senior managers) ignorance of Agenda for Change and the Working Time Regulations (WTR), and the mistake of mixing the two together.

The WTR state that a worker should get no less than 20 minutes rest after six continuous hours at work. That is a Rest Break.

Section 10.1 of Agenda for Change National Handbook states that staff work "37.5 hours a week excluding meal breaks" The break given here is a Meal Break.

Because this distinction has been raised so often by management, albeit to stop staff having food, UNISON would like to see two (2) breaks given within a single shift. A Rest Break and a Meal Break.

We are happy to discuss where and when these two breaks are given, however, we would insist that the Meal Break is taken at either an Ambulance Station or a Hospital that has appropriate agreed facilities.

UNISON would also like to discuss the application of Annex N of the Agenda for Change National Handbook in regards payments made when away from base Stations.

We would also like to see a choice given to staff regarding payment or TOIL when breaks are not given.

We are concerned also with the withdrawing of the jointly agreed compensation paid for no break given.

Annual Leave

As discussed previously we do not understand the Annual Leave proposal within 'A Time for Change' and await a management revision.

Rosters

The staff-side of the Joint Secretaries have met with, and have viewed a presentation, by the Consultant brought in to facilitate changes in rosters at a local level. We will take an 'arms length approach' and let the agreed Framework be used by staff, Union Representatives and managers. Problems will be dealt with via the framework and Joint Secretaries.

Active Area Cover

We are happy to enter discussions regarding Active Area Cover although we repeat our opposition for this to be on a 24 hour basis. We take this position on Health and Safety grounds. You state that a 'full risk assessment has been conducted'. Can I please have a copy of this along with the names of people who conducted it? I would like to also know the date, time and place of this risk assessment.

Tony, UNISON supports Public Services. We support the London Ambulance Service. We support our members and staff. We support patients and the people of London.

Modernisation should make things better for all of those groups. We do not believe that what is contained within 'A Time for Change' does that. Staff are being blamed for the failures of a Service delivering Government cuts.

A&E Support Staff are being asked to deliver a Service 'on the cheap'. Paramedics are being asked to take all the risks and increase their responsibility for no extra reward or recognition.

All front-line staff are being asked to work harder and work faster as if they have been having an easy time of it in the past. Technicians also feel under threat.

The achievements of all staff working within London Ambulance seem to have been swept aside in the rushing tide of efficiency savings.

Best wishes

Eric Roberts
Branch Secretary
LAS UNISON