



AMBULANCE SERVICES SAVED

UNISON campaigning in the North West has notched up a key victory after the North West Ambulance Service suspended proposals to reduce frontline services across the region.

The ambulance service trust had proposed to withdraw emergency vehicles from service and to downgrade other vehicles, which they could no longer use to respond to emergency calls.

A campaign launched by UNISON saw more than 11,000 people sign a petition against the plans, which was submitted to Downing Street last week.

Members of the public and health workers were worried that the cuts would have increased waiting times for ambulances and ultimately cost lives.

Now, the service says it has received additional temporary funding until March that will mean the proposals will not be implemented this year.

"It's great that people power has been successful and these cuts have been suspended," said UNISON north west regional convenor Angela Rayner as she welcomed the news. "People have had enough of austerity and of reckless cuts to public services.

"Nobody voted for fewer ambulances. We remain a wealthy country and it is ridiculous that cuts to life-saving emergency services are even being contemplated."

But she warned: "We must remain vigilant as the funding is temporary. We may need a similar campaign next year to protect our services."

What the North West ambulance trust proposed:

- withdrawing an emergency vehicle at night in each of Bury, Bolton, Wigan, Blackpool (Thursday to Sunday), Carlisle and Penrith;
- withdrawing an emergency vehicle during the day in each of Ellesmere Port, Formby, Warrington, Burscough, Blackburn (two days), Leyland (two days), Accrington and Nelson
- replacing a number of "intermediate tier vehicles" with "urgent care vehicles" which do not carry paramedics and cannot respond to emergency calls - this would have affected communities across the north west including West Cheshire, Wirral, north Liverpool, central Liverpool, Fylde, Burnley, Bury, Bolton, Manchester, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, south Manchester and Rochdale.

