



Joint Trade Unions of the West Midlands Ambulance Service

On the 18th July 2012 the Regional Partnership Forum, which consists of regional senior staff representatives and senior management met at the civic centre in Wombourne.

During the meeting it became apparent the partnership working and industrial relations had deteriorated over several matters of which I list below but stress this list is not exhaustive but remains the main basis of concern.

- > The unions over several months have raised serious concerns over the way in which staff members were being treated and felt management were dismissive of their concerns.
- > Managements own interpretations of policies previously agreed by both parties at the policy group, not adhering to policies, and changing policies without consultation or negotiation.
- > Non adherence and disregard to the union's recognition agreement
- > Banding Issues
- > Introduction of Pathways
- > Harassment and bullying style tactics

The joint unions felt that they were unable to move forward in working towards a consistent approach with management, and therefore registered a formal dispute with the West Midlands Ambulance Service and the following statement was given.

The staff side members of the RPF would formally advise West Midlands Ambulance that it is now lodging a formal dispute with the service as partnership working and industrial relations have broken down. The joint unions would now be suspending all strategic meetings including the RPF, LPF, COO, and policy Meetings. We will be looking to ACAS for assistance as an independent body and request a meeting with the Non Execs of the trust as a matter of urgency. If we cannot resolve matters in the short term we will have to progress our concerns outside of the trust.

SICKNESS POLICY

- > Interpretation
- > Long Term Sickness – Staff are being put on a staged review.
- > 28 Day Ban on overtime regardless of circumstances.
- > Stages - 5 months review and when clear not returning to 0 status
- > Discretion being taken away from managers & supervisors
- > ASAO - Doing sickness reviews with no formal training
- > Return to work - being done ad hoc.
- > Return to works being called as a welfare meeting and being used as stages.
- > HR bringing out new guidance outside of the sickness policy (SG email evidence)

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

- > HR/Managements own interpretation of the 4.14 (leading to dismissal in some cases)
- > Agreeing of 4.14 to find two sanctions imposed.
- > HR acting as an officer within the investigation and not impartial.
- > Lack of partnership working within the investigation and disciplinary policy.

GREIVANCE PROCEDURE

- > Non adherence to time limits within the policy.
- > Managements non acceptance and disregard of grievances.
- > HR/Management continually extending the time limits on the hearing of such grievances in order that they fall outside of the time limit to proceed to an employment tribunal.

LONE WORKER POLICY

- > Non adherence to the policy putting crews at risk (evidence given to Jeremy Brown at EOC RPF)
- > Solo responders feeling bullied into dangerous situations.
- > Feeling harassed when crews find themselves a solo response for whatever reason.

DRIVING POLICY

- > Introduction of policy without agreement (interim policy)
- > Use of such policy in order to discipline staff.
- > Interim policy was to be for 3 months only.

PAY BANDINGS

- > Community Paramedic Role - New position requires new Job description.
- > Band 4 Technician issues (working with ECA's)
- > Paramedics being promoted to band 6 in order to increase the RRV's
- > CSD paramedic's new staff remaining on band 5 when the job was re-evaluated and moved to band 6 due to the extra skills required to clinical triage over the phone.

PATHWAYS

- > Clinically unsafe triage system.
- > Lack of confidence in the system.
- > Concern for the amount of SUI receiving.
- > CSD responsibility and the HPC.
- > Cancellation of the Clinical Floor walker.
- > Manchester triage systems (downgrading of cases)
- > Time of call to disposition increased (putting solo's responses at risk)
- > Clinically untrained staff using pathways, when a vast clinical knowledge of patients symptoms is required.
. as pathways is open to interpretation.
- > Outstanding clinical issues/ risks log (e.g. angina pt no response)
- > Bringing in local policies to overrule the pathways triage system as it's felt unsafe e.g.(Hypo, breathing, psychiatric patients, burns, etc.)
- > When issues raised on cases blame being centered on the call assessor.
- > Constant change on procedure and protocols on pathways with guidance notices.
- > CSD and the start of performance managing and the downgrading of cases (Manchester triage system)
- > Lack of pathways meetings with staff side in order work through issues.

TEMPORARY INJURY ALLOWANCE

- > HR interpretation of government guidance.
- > HR individual decision of who gets paid.

MILEAGE PAYMENTS

- > HR Director imposing changes to mileage rates.

OTHER OUTSTANDING ISSUES

- > Lack of communication from senior management on decision making.
- > The disbandment of the successful HCRT tier.
- > The shortening of shift time and reduction of night crews in the Black Country division some shifts to finish at 0200hrs - Then to discover management has asked ST John's to provide cover at weekends and nights.
- > Not listening to staff doing the job when decision making (EOC - standbys, controlling, new hub positioning) performance managing.
- > CSD removal of the responder car (part of the Job Description for the paramedics on CSD)
- > Short notice changes in procedures etc (guidance on one response only to cases)

CANCELLATION OF MEETINGS

- > Short notice cancellation of important strategic (working in partnership) meetings.

There are a lot of changes taking place as the West Midlands Ambulance Service goes through a major transformation process.

As staff side representatives we can either work with management or against management.

We have tried tirelessly to work with management, but now feel frustrated and exhausted by the lack of consideration and support being shown, and the total disrespect to policies and procedures.

If our management team are not capable of resolving these important issues, we will seek advice and resolution from an external organisation who can.

The Joint Trade Unions of the West Midlands Ambulance Service

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