

No to cuts in Unsocial Hours payments



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is UNISON's Ambulance Sector Lead. Read on to find out about the key policy areas UNISON will be addressing on your behalf in their fight to prevent the many threats to ambulance services across the UK.

UNISON members, along with other trade unions in England's ambulance services have voted overwhelmingly to reject proposals to deduct unsocial hours payments during sickness absence. Ambulance staff receive unsocial hours payments under Annex E of the NHS terms and conditions handbook. Under this system a percentage supplement is made to pay, reflecting the working pattern and proportion of unsocial hours. This differs from the "retrospective" system that applies to other NHS staff where an agreed "per hour" enhancement to plain time hourly rates is applied. USH allowances make up between 9 and 25% of salaries for most ambulance staff. In February, the NHS Staff Council agreed a package of England-only changes to Agenda for Change which included changes to the calculation of pay during sickness absence for staff who receive unsocial hours payments under the retrospective system. The employers believe that these changes automatically apply to ambulance staff but UNISON does not agree. We do not accept that the changes made to the handbook have automatic implications for unsocial hours payments made under Annex E but agreed to consult members on whether to accept or reject these proposals. UNISON, GMB and Unite have consulted members and all three ballots resulted in overwhelming rejection of the proposal. This is a clear sign that ambulance staff won't accept further cuts. Ambulance staff have had up to 12% cut from the value of their pay over the last few years and are already working extra hours to cope with the rising cost of living. The rejection shows that our members can't and won't take any more cuts. In addition to worrying about paying their



bills, ambulance staff are feeling the pressure of mounting workloads, an increase in violence and abuse, and - unless the Government make changes to their pension plans- also face the prospect of working until they are nearly seventy. In the course of their work, ambulance staff are exposed to high levels of physical, mental and emotional risk, which makes them vulnerable to illness. With sickness absence rates consistently higher levels than the rest of the NHS, Ambulance Trusts could make more effective savings through addressing the causes of work related ill health rather than seeking to make staff pay for Government cuts. The employers have already signalled that

they will impose these changes without agreement. But this is unlawful in our view and would force our members to act. We are now seeking an urgent meeting with employers to make sure that the dangers of imposing these changes are fully explored.

Stop Press...Stop Press...

At the time of going to press NHS Employers have told unions that they are proceeding and have imposed the changes without notice and without agreement with effect from 1/9/2013. As a result of this imposition local and national disputes have been lodged with all of the ambulance trusts in England.



999 - answer the call for your NHS

UNISON along with trade unions across the country will be holding a rally in Manchester on September 29th to campaign against the cuts taking place in the NHS. We believe that the NHS is under threat from privatisation and cuts. The new Health and Social Care Act has pushed the profit motive to the heart of the English NHS. Key treatments are being restricted, services are being cut and jobs lost, resulting in increased waiting times, delays and staff shortages on our wards.

Restricted funding settlements are also affecting Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. But how does this affect you? We are facing a longer wait in A&E, a longer wait for test results and shortage of staff throughout our hospitals, in other words a poorer service all round. Our NHS remains the fairest and most cost-effective health service in the world and we don't want to see it ruined. **If you agree, why not join us? Find out more at www.unison.co.uk**

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