

A great time to get involved in UNISON



by Jess Micallef
UNISON EEAS
branch secretary

IT'S AN exciting time to be a part of UNISON East of England Ambulance Service Branch.

I assumed the secretary position in November when our previous secretary stepped down and am taking this branch forwards with enthusiasm.

Our activist engagement has been improving month on month, we've had a great response to our calls for more activists.

Nominations have now closed for branch officers, workplace stewards and health and safety reps in the EEAST branch.

There is one contested branch officer position and members will be contacted in February 2020 via home addresses to vote in this election.

We are going to rotate future AGMs between counties but this time we are starting with Bury St Edmunds which is roughly in the centre of the Trust area.

We know that for

some this is a little way to travel, however the Branch will cover your travel expenses and we are looking into chartering some vehicles to get groups of staff there.

If you think you can put together a contingent then let us know and we'll see how we can help.

As no nominations were received for Suffolk County Lead, Herts County Lead, Equalities Officer, Environmental Officer, Young Members Officer, LGBT+ Officer, Disabled Members Officer and Womens Officer, these positions can also be elected at the AGM.

There are also a number of workplaces/ stations that have not elected a UNISON rep for their workplace. A list of UNISON reps by workplace will be shared at the AGM.

Members that work at a workplace that has no UNISON workplace rep are able to follow a process to be nominated to be the UNISON workplace rep. Please speak to a branch officer or another rep if you might be interested.

AGM
6.30pm, 18 March
at Higdon House,
Bury St Edmunds
IP32 7AR

February 2020

Also inside:

- Health and Safety update
- New BME Network
- Better safety in Norwich
- Boost for students
- Bullying
- Fiat training survey
- Climate emergency

Health & safety corner: Improved Skoda Scout RRVs start to hit the road



SKODA SCOUT RRVs should be rolling out by now and the specification includes several changes and improvements. The base vehicle comes with lane deviation warning, driver fatigue monitor and auto-braking as standard features. Behind the driver's seat is dedicated cage for PPE and also an electric cooler box for food and drink.

Access to the crew PPE can be achieved from offside or nearside to improve crew safety. As with all new vehicles staff should undertake training on the vehicle, take it for a familiarisation drive and the user manual should be read in order to become fully conversant with the Scout.

With regard to the new Fiat DSA mandatory training: Included within the package is using the powered stair chair which should be conducted on a full flight of stairs with a volunteer seated on it or a similar load and employees are entitled to take the Fiat for a familiarisation drive in order to understand the handling characteristics.

If staff require further training on any aspect of the training package, they should request it at the time. When satisfied that they are confident and competent they should then complete the sign-off documents.

When the pre-owned Fiat van conversion ambulances (which do not have emergency blue lights fitted) were

procured, their role was to meet the demands for non-emergency urgent work and were to be crewed by second and third-year students who would receive back up if required.

Crews that are to work on these vehicles must be shown the correct and approved method of attaching the extensions before being assigned to any calls. UNISON has raised this with the Trust and is waiting for a response.

Staff are reminded that the Datix system is to be used to report any adverse incidents. By completing a Datix report it alerts the Trust to the issue and enables the audit team to assess the frequency of incidents and also if they are a Trust-wide issue. Raising a Datix may also prevent a repeat incident or another person becoming injured.

There should be a Vehicle Defect Log Book in every vehicle in which crews should record any defects which arise during their shift. The log book is not transferrable between vehicles and should be checked as part of the VDI. It has been noted that a number of vehicles do not have these log books and this is being addressed.

Concerns were raised via the health & safety committee that a number of employees are commencing their mandatory roadworthy checks and vehicle daily in-

spections of ambulances up to 30 minutes before the start of their rostered shift. The reasons given included that the 15 minutes was not a realistic amount of time.

These employees are carrying out work-related tasks but are under the impression that they cannot claim this as overtime because their early start has not been authorised. UNISON has raised this matter with the Trust and is waiting for a response.

Clarification about the use and role of nurses on emergency ambulances has been raised with the Trust and we are waiting for a response.

Concerns have been raised due to an increase in the number of manual handling injuries being reported which happened as a result of moving patients on old-styled carry chairs. UNISON Health & Safety is working towards an acceptable resolution and will keep this closely monitored.

Jeff Pittman

UNISON health & safety officer



UNISON backs new Trust BME network

WE'RE PLEASED to see that EEAST's new BME Network has got underway. It is a cross-representative group of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees from across EEAST aiming to work with the Trust to utilise the skills and resources of its BME employees.

UNISON EEAST Black members officer Glenn Carrington said: "It is encouraging to see that the EEAST are taking equality seriously and have set up the BME network across the employer.

"The Network has agreed its terms of reference and is looking to set up its work programme for 2020 that I am hoping will include issues around Bullying and Harassment and promoting employ-

ment to EEAST within the BME community.

"Black members in UNISON work to improve equality in the workplace and challenge racism and discrimination."

Keep an eye on the Trust's intranet site for details of the next meeting.

UNISON is committed to increasing its representation and participation of Black people within the union.

It is important that there is a visible and vocal presence of the Black members' experience. Black members' self-organised groups (SOGs) work in partnership with other parts of the union to identify and promote our race equality agenda.

You can find out more about this work on the UNISON website.

Improving safety at N&N

THERE has been a problem with lighting at Norfolk and Norwich Hospital for some time.

After a near-miss, staff were told to wear high-vis at all times (especially in the darker months) because of the high flow of traffic around the hospital.

But, as most people are aware, PPE is the last link in the chain for health and safety.

A joint meeting was set up with the hospital and our GM and me which has resulted in the curb to A&E to be lowered and better lighting put

in – this has to comply with aviation standards because of helicopters landing.

This will be a 100% improvement and a major achievement to facilitate better working conditions for our hard-working staff.

The work should commence on the project early 2020.

All ambulance stations in Central Norfolk are up to date with their three-monthly inspections.

Mark Wibberley MBE,
H&S Representative Central Norfolk

In brief...

Cash for students

After years of campaigning, the government has finally reintroduced some financial help for health-care students. The £5,000 for student paramedics, dietitians, nurses and other allied health professionals is obviously welcome, but UNISON will continue to campaign for the abolition of healthcare student fees to attract the numbers of people the profession needs.

Bullying concerns

We've received a range of complaints about the Trust's delay in dealing with Dignity at Work grievances and how damaging this is to staff. We've given the Trust two weeks to respond to our concerns before the branch move forward with a stronger anti-bullying campaign and raise other concerns about data breaches. Watch this space.

Fiat training survey

A number of concerns were raised about the consistency of training on the Fiat fleet. To get a better view of what's happening across the Trust, we'd appreciate if you'd take the time – less than five minutes – to fill in our survey before 14 February.

You can find it on our website: eeas.unison.site

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UNISON
East of England
Ambulance branch

NHS tackles health and climate chaos



by Dave Prentis

UNISON general secretary

NHS Chief Sir Simon Stevens announced last month that the NHS and its staff will step up action to tackle the climate “health emergency” this year, helping prevent illness, reducing pressure on A&Es, and saving tens of thousands of lives.

He announced three steps the NHS will take during 2020 to tackle this problem.

First, NHS England is establishing an expert panel to chart a practical route map this year to enable the NHS to get to ‘net zero’, becoming the world’s first major health service to do so.

The NHS in England is the only health-care system in the world that is routinely reporting on greenhouse gas emissions. The Expert Panel will look at changes the NHS can make in its own activities; in its supply chain; and through wider partnerships.

These include the Long-Term Plan commitment to better use technology to make up to 30 million outpatient appointments redundant, sparing patients thousands of unnecessary trips to and from hospital.

It will also look at changes that can be made in the NHS’s medical devices, consumables and pharmaceutical supply, and areas the NHS can influence such as the energy sector as the health service moves to

using more renewable energy.

NHS chief executive Sir Simon Stevens said: “With almost 700 people dying from potentially avoidable deaths due to air pollution every week we are facing a health emergency as well as a climate emergency.

“If health services across the world were their own country, they’d be the fifth-largest emitter on the planet.

“That’s why today we are mobilising our 1.3 million staff to take action for a greener NHS.”

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis added: “Involving staff is crucial if the NHS is to help the UK meet its emissions targets in good time. They know more than anyone how the health service ticks and so are best placed to make practical green suggestions to get the NHS to where it needs to be.”

The NHS will be taking immediate action in 2020, with a proposed new NHS Standard Contract calling on hospitals to reduce carbon from buildings and estates.

The health service will also now launch its own grassroots campaign ‘For a Greener NHS’ to encourage staff and hospitals to cut their impact on people’s health and the environment.

Not a member? Here’s three easy ways to join UNISON today:



Join online at
joinunison.org



Call us on
0800 171 2193



Ask your UNISON rep
for an application form