



Great Western Ambulance Service, 2 May 2008

As Branch Secretary of UNISON in GWAS I am extremely disappointed at the reaction by the Trust to a well founded concern; namely, the insufficient number of traditional (double crewed) ambulances to convey patients.

The Trust has increased its resources over the past 2 years, but that increase has been chiefly concentrated on developing more solo responders, in order to help the Trust meet category 'A' attendance targets.

Additional funding has also been ring fenced in order to develop specialized emergency care practitioners (ECP's). Staff who can prevent - through their greater expertise and ability to use different treatment pathways - the unnecessary admittance (and carriage) of patients to the A&E or hospital admission wards; however, this staff group is still in its infancy and will not make a fully realised difference in minimising the unnecessary carriage of patients for a number of years.

So, with 999 calls increasing by roughly 10% year on year; through having, in real terms, a decreased number of traditional ambulances, we are too often left with a resource shortfall and the resultant long waiting times in moving patients - with the added issue of this impacting upon both the police and fire service.

It is a real issue - one which has been brewing for a number of years.

It is in need of mature debate and the defensive dismissal, by the Trust, of the concerns raised is unhelpful.

In addition to the concerns raised, there remains, for us as a Branch, a backlog of issues in need of joint debate and resolution.

Issues such as:

- rest breaks
- mandatory training
- absenteeism
- banding issues
- annual leave
- inequitable salaries
- emergency care assistants
- staff appraisal system
- 999 attendance times
- IWL (improving working lives) and work life balance principles

In conclusion, in light of what we believe to be the valid resource concerns of the Police Federation, Fire Brigades Union and UNISON, the Executive of GWAS UNISON Branch will be sending a letter to the board of GWAS, with a view to discussing the issue, amongst others - and will do so with the intention of involving ACAS in future negotiations between us.

Steve Smart
Branch Secretary UNISON, GWAS