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To:
Local Council, Chief Executives
Acute Trust Chief Executives
Clinical Commissioning Group Chief Officers
Yorkshire & Humber Local Healthwatch
Scrutiny Committee Chairs

10 December 2014

Dear Colleague

Re: Unite the Union Letter of 2 December 2014 regarding Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) NHS Trust

I understand that you may be in receipt of a general letter from Unite the Union which makes various allegations about patient safety. I wanted take the unusual step of writing to you directly to correct a number of factual errors and reassure you about our actions to date in respect of patients.

Firstly, I would like to reassure you that all YAS decisions are focused on continuing to deliver a high quality, safe and responsive service for patients. In order to achieve this we are continuing to increase our number of frontline paramedics year-on-year, maintaining our fleet numbers to match staff rotas and ensuring clinicians have the vehicles, equipment and training they need to care for patients.

I can also categorically state that the allegation that YAS is manipulating call-out data to meet targets is wholly false. In July 2013 the Care Quality Commission carried out an unannounced inspection. They observed our triage and re-grading system in practice and concluded that it was safe and fit for purpose.

This latest correspondence is against a background of industrial action commenced by Unite following YAS's decision to derecognise them in February 2013. This decision was taken for a number of factors including poor behaviour of local representatives and regional officers and the breakdown of the relationship between the two unions Unite and Unison. The majority of YAS staff are represented by Unison with only a small proportion (less than 8 percent) being members of Unite.

Since then, Unite has been in discussions with YAS about achieving formal re-recognition and rebuilding its relationship. We have been very clear with Unite that we will only be prepared to offer formal re-recognition once their relationship with Unison has been repaired, an agreement made about behaviours between the two unions and any differences resolved

at a local and national level. Unite representatives have previously committed to sign a protocol relating to behaviours, but to date they have been unable to secure this.

To that end, we have suggested ACAS conciliation with ourselves and both unions to try to seek a resolution. Unite's response to this, to date, has been to confirm that they will commence a negative campaign against the Trust.

Turning to the more important allegations in respect of patient safety, the position put forward by Unite is not correct and I would like to reassure you that, despite Unite's assertions, patients are not being put at risk by YAS. The enclosed frequently asked questions give more detail about the work we are doing to meet rising demand, the increasingly complex needs of patients and to develop a clinically-skilled workforce.

It is extremely disappointing that these allegations continue to be made and that Trust resource, that should be focused on delivering quality patient care, is being diverted to respond to this negative campaign.

If you have any questions about the work of the Trust or the issues that have been raised by Unite, please do not hesitate to get in touch. I, or a member of my Executive Team, would be happy to set up a meeting. Please contact my PA Dawn Cronian, email dawn.cronian@yas.nhs.uk or phone 01924 584066.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Rod Barnes', with a stylized, cursive script.

Rod Barnes
Interim Chief Executive