

**"An open letter to those who should care at the CCG's"**

**(16 Oct 2018)**

Many of us are currently waiting to hear about our fate either in this round of redundancies or possibly the inevitable next tranche, can trace our beginnings in the ambulance service back to the then Sussex Ambulance Service many years ago.

We joined wanting to help and care for people within our community, with all of us remembering that after our initial training we felt part of a family with everyone looking out for each other and pulling together to help patients whilst striving to give them a first class service. We prided ourselves on understanding our patient's needs and through regular contact with them always willing to go the extra mile when providing assistance for them.

We have all since then had an unfortunate front row view of the slow decline in the service culminating in work colleagues and the service becoming fragmented and passed from the NHS with South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAMB) to Thames Ambulance Service Ltd (TASL) and any number of other private companies with no real track record or decent reputation around professional delivery, with the likes of Langfords and Docklands as they all undertook work as a contractors for the shambles which was Coperforma, with the result being that it caused chaos for staff and patients alike and the demise of all originally involved with Thames looking like being the latest.

We watched with horror as professionalism declined, and concerns about profitability efficiencies took precedence. We were shocked as recruitment criteria for being an ambulance care assistant lowered, meaning we saw some pretty shocking people being recruited with even some new staff having previous criminal convictions and being told by managers that this was okay as long as it was kept quiet.

Thankfully those sorts have gone and we can say that those direct TASL employees who have remained, have displayed and hold the same value, skills and levels of professionalism we all strived to achieve back in the NHS.

My professional friends and colleagues with life skills who left their problems at home to come to work and help patients with theirs, people with vast experience have and are intending to leave the service because it's making them ill with stress and the often constant unachievable workloads alongside organisational bullying that inevitably finds itself manifesting when profit takes precedence over patient care.

We are the people that are looking after your mum, dad, wife, husband, auntie or uncle who have been let down over the last few years when the CCG's tried to privatise the Patient Transport service on the cheap and as a result Thames Ambulance now wishes to bail out of the contract because making a profit has become challenging and we are the ones left facing the harsh reality of redundancy.

This should not be about profit margins, key performance indicators and bottom lines, it should be about people caring for people, but we find ourselves feeling that apart from our union the GMB, who is caring for us, the carers and our families?

Happy if anyone with responsibility at the CCG's would like to come round to visit and explain to everyone at Thames Ambulance why some of them won't be experiencing a merry Christmas, when patients will still need moving and other private providers will simply be taking on staff on lesser terms and conditions to carry out the work that Thames has ceased to be able to provide by cutting their workforce.

When we started within the service we had something very special that was at its highest peak, the very best place to work, unfortunately its now reversed and those now awaiting the chop from our employer are at their lowest point and we are sick of seeing a service we all care about ruined and in such a state all in the name of profit or cost savings.

GMB members and Thames Ambulance Staff call upon the CCG's, even if those involved in the original outsourcing decision are not in place anymore, to support us in our time of need and seek to back SCAS in taking not only ourselves back into the NHS family, but the full provision.

Do the right thing and correct what CCG colleagues clearly got wrong at the time of the outsourcing fiasco in Sussex PTS, and move all current Thames staff fully over and back into the NHS with South Central Ambulance, and let's work together to make PTS in Sussex first class once again.

*On behalf of GMB members and the majority of Thames Ambulance crews*