UNISON PRESS RELEASE

UNISON has hit out at plans to close the two Horsham (West Sussex)Blood Mobile Units - one blood collection team

Also under threat of closure are North Devon & Isle of Wight Blood Collection team's

This is part of a National NHSBT decision to close four Blood Collection Teams and merge other teams which part of a National re-organisation which will see 98 staff under threat of redundancy.

This is truly devastating news said UNISON official Michael Walker

The union UNISON has called the proposals short sighted and devastating news for over 3,000 dedicated blood donors in Surrey, Sussex and outlying areas.

On top of the impact in local villages, Numerous companies, who have allowed blood collection on their sites will no longer be required to do so, yet their blood is still urgently needed.

UNISON has warned that ending village blood collections and thereby excluding rural communities from the opportunity to donate blood could have long term consequences for the blood service. These sessions are often early day sessions and thus excludes people from giving blood during the mornings any longer. They will be forced to attend larger hall sessions, at a distance from their homes, on late afternoon and evenings only, if they wish to continue to give at all.

UNISON is entering into negotiations with the Blood Service and is calling on the Blood Service to enter into meaningful discussions with the donors in Horsham and to fully explain the justification for the closure.

The justification for axing the team, is allegedly due to the fall in demand for Blood Products Nationally by 73,000 units. UNISON believes it is fool hardy to base any health service closure plans on the very best case scenario. This situation could change at any moment should the demand for blood suddenly rise. As has historically happened.

Michael Walker UNISON Regional Officer stated: “The dedicated donor care staff have worked tirelessly for the Blood Service in West Sussex often taking out the Blood Mobiles short staffed showing a dedicated commitment second to none.

“We would urge everyone to get behind and support the Horsham Blood Collection Teams - there needs to be meaningful consultation with staff and donors

“The Horsham Blood Mobile Team has a long tradition of working with local companies to ensure a consistent supply of blood, to end this practice is simply short sighted and could endanger national blood collection targets. Employees make appointments whilst at work and will not always want to find an evening session close to home.

“The end of village blood collection sessions is yet another blow to the life of rural communities and we urge local councillors and MP's to speak up for rural blood collection services

“These are the same nurses and donor carers who battled through the snow to ensure the service had enough blood last winter, who worked hard last year to ensure the stock build was achieved so we had enough blood for the Olympics, who now face a bleak future, at a time when there is apparently still a constant demand for blood and active advertising on National television and radio for new donors!”

Villages and towns in West Sussex and Surrey that will no longer have an opportunity to dontae blood include,

Wivelesfield, Elstead, Milford, Rustington, Mertsham, Godalming, Ripley, Storrington, and also company blood collection will also be terminated at Thales , Crawley. Alliance Insurance, Guildford. Pfizer, Tadworth. EDF Energy, Hove, Crawley, Worthing.

Worthing Hospital. Guildford Hospital, Eastbourne Hospital. Shoreham Hospital. Sainsburys, Rustington. Asda, Burgh Heath. Asda, Brighton. Sussex Police, Lewes & Brighton. British Aeorospace Farnborough. Elektra, Crawley. Virgin Atlantic, Crawley. Gatwick. Nestle, Gatwick. The Body Shop, Littlehampton. Parker Hanniford, Littlehampton. John Wiley, Bognor & Chichester. MGN Insurance, Worthing and many more.

NHSBT press statement

Changes to blood donation sessions in Horsham planned for later this year

NHS Blood and Transplant will be making some changes to when and where it collects blood in Horsham, and is encouraging all existing donors to continue giving blood.

The changes, which will be made in the autumn, are in response to NHS Blood and Transplant reviewing its collection plans so that it can still meet patient needs and the demand for blood from NHS hospitals, while also providing a good service to its loyal donors.

There will still be regular blood donation sessions in the area, so every donor that wants to give blood will still be able to do so.

Jackie Morgan, regional operations manager for NHS Blood and Transplant said: “Blood donors in the region are very important to us. Each and every one of them saves and improves lives every time they come to donate. We will be communicating with every donor that currently donates at a session we are proposing to close and identifying the nearest alternative session that they could donate at in the future"

“Like any organisation that receives money from the public purse, we have a responsibility to deliver our services as efficiently and effectively as possible so that more money is available to spend on frontline patient care. We work closely with hospitals so that we plan to collect only what patients need. By making some changes to our session timetables and where we hold our sessions we will be able to run a more efficient service, while still meeting the needs of patients.”

Impact on staff:

We are consulting with our employees as our proposals may involve closing the smaller blood collection teams that work in the Horsham area.

We will do everything we can to support the affected staff who currently work on the Horsham bloodmobiles through any changes and will work hard to find other opportunities within NHS Blood and Transplant for anybody whose existing post is removed.

The closure of the mobile blood team in Horsham could affect a maximum of 9 employees, but we are doing what we can to reduce job losses and some vacancies have already been identified on the remaining Horsham team.

If you are 17 and over and in generally good health, and are interested in finding out more about giving blood in the region, visit www.blood.co.uk or call NHS Blood and Transplant on 0300 123 23 23.