

Patient transfer across Southern England set to be 'at mercy of private sector'



Once again, the service is going to be about profiteers making a fast buck

GMB, the union for health services, is warning of the effect privatisation may have on patient transport services across Southern England.

Non-Emergency Patient Transport is currently operated by South Central Ambulance Service across Sussex, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire but has lost the contract to private contractor E-



med from 1 April 2025.

Staff look set to lose access to the NHS pension scheme and NHS pay awards as well as suffering significant changes to terms and conditions, including new base depots and meal break arrangements.

Gary Palmer, GMB Regional Organiser said:

“It has become increasingly clear to us from our early meetings with E-med management and from their employee engagement sessions that patients and staff are far less important than profit margins.

“It should have been made clear by the commissioners during the procurement process that our members’ bandings – as agreed through job evaluation processes – as well as pension provision and regular pay rises were not up for grabs.

“They have instead accepted such a low bid that any provider would have to diminish staffing costs to win the contract and continue to turn a profit, when even the current provider SCAS – who are not run for profit – could not match the cost parameters.

“Sussex commissioners have tried this before with Coperforma – a disastrous decision which ultimately cost the public millions of pounds to put right only 12 months down the road.

“Once again, the service is going to cease to be about the patients and instead about profiteers making a fast buck.”

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