**Text of letter sent by Chris Jenkinson, UNISON Eastern regional secretary:**

You will no doubt be aware of the recent collapse of the Private Ambulance Service Ltd which until Friday served your constituents and residents across Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

It has been devastating for those staff, many of whom are UNISON members, who are owed thousands of pounds of unpaid wages and missing pension contributions. These are low paid workers and are now struggling to pay their bills.  However, there has been even greater damage to the confidence in this essential NHS service for the patients who rely on it.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time patient transport in the East of England has suffered. Indeed this is the second time in seven months that this commissioned service has failed. The previous provider walked away from the contract and thousands of patients citing affordability as the primary reason for not wanting to continue with it.

Throughout these last six months UNISON has been aware of growing issues in the performance and reliability of the Private Ambulance Service with patients waiting hours, sometimes days to be taken to appointments.  Our members have raised concerns about patient safety, ambulances that don’t meet basic standards of roadworthiness and potential breaches of employment law.

UNISON has taken every opportunity at all levels to express these concerns and ask that action be taken to resolve the issues quickly. Despite this open and honest approach, UNISON has found the silence on the part of some of the local CCGs to be deafening.

Sadly this is not the only example of contracts of this nature failing as CCG budgets across the country are squeezed and the savings passed on to the services the public need and use. This incident demonstrates that NHS services in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire have reached a crunch point – CCGs should not be relying on low cost, low quality providers. It is demonstrable that repeated privatisation of services within our NHS has failed, not only on the test of cost effectiveness but most importantly on patient care that your constituents deserve to receive.

Due to the seriousness of this most incident UNISON is asking all MPs in the counties affected to write to the Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt to request a full inquiry into how this situation was ever allowed to happen and secure assurances that it will not be allowed to happen again.  We believe that NHS England should ask place a moratorium on CCGs awarding patient transport service contracts until all lessons have been learned from this debacle.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

**MPs and their constituencies:**

Mohammad Yasin - Bedford

Kelvin Hopkins – Luton North

Gavin Shuker - Luton South

Nadine Dorries - Mid Bedfordshire

Alistair Burt - North East Bedfordshire

Andrew Selous - South West Bedfordshire

Charles Walker - Broxbourne

Michael Penning – Hemel Hempstead

Mark Prisk – Hertford and Stortford

Oliver Dowden - Hertsmere

Bin Afolami – Hitchin and Harpenden

Oliver Heald – North East Hertfordshire

David Gauke – South West Hertfordhire

Anne Main St Albans

Stephen McPartland - Stevenage

Richard Harrington - Watford

Grant Shapps – Grant Shapps