

WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO THE CHILDREN, ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL
Monday 20 April 2026 Baz Harding-Clark, Branch Secretary, UNISON Bath Health Branch Chair of Staff Side, Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust

I am Branch Secretary of UNISON Bath Health Branch. I also serve as Chair of Staff Side at the RUH, and I am directly affected by this decision in my clinical role. I represent the workers directly impacted. I have formally written to the Secretary of State, Wes Streeting, about it. I am here because my members have been failed by every formal channel available to them so far.

Bank workers are not being transferred. Their NHS bank employment will cease on 1 August without choice. If they want to continue working bank shifts at the same hospitals, the only option will be to register with a private company — Pulse, part of the Acacium Group, a private equity-backed organisation.

There is no continuity of service. No NHS terms and conditions. And from that point forward, no ability to continue accruing their NHS pension. For a healthcare assistant working bank shifts for another ten years, the difference between a 23.7% NHS employer pension contribution and around 6% in the private sector represents tens of thousands of pounds in lost retirement income.

The Trust's own Equality Impact Assessment shows that at the RUH, 56% of bank workers are from ethnic minority backgrounds compared to 27% of substantive staff. Between 64% and 87% of bank workers are women, depending on the site. The proposed mitigation for this disproportionate impact is quoted verbatim: "encourage bank workers to take up substantive employment." That is not a mitigation. That is telling predominantly ethnic minority, predominantly female workers to reorganise their lives to suit the Trust's staffing model.

The consultation process initially excluded bank workers entirely. Only after union challenge were they invited into information sessions — not consultation, information. They were presented with a decision that had already been made. Both UNISON and all of Staff Side formally opposed this in writing. We were heard once and then overridden. I have written formally to the Secretary of State describing this as privatisation by stealth. No response has been received. This panel should add its voice to that letter without delay.

We have seen similar patterns before. At Great Western Hospital, one of the trusts involved in this decision, outsourced facilities services have previously led to disputes over pay and conditions, including industrial action involving workers employed by Serco. These situations highlight the risks when staff are moved out of NHS employment — particularly around pay parity, accountability, and terms and conditions.

That is what outsourcing looks like in practice. That is the future these bank workers face.