

NEWS

PM's praise for fundraising champion Ivan

By Harry Preston

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A DAD is the first in the North East to receive a special award from Prime Minister David Cameron.

Yesterday Ivan Hollingsworth was given the Point of Light accolade, which recognises outstanding individual volunteers. The award has been developed by the Prime Minister and Ivan has been honoured for the money he has raised for Newcastle Freeman Hospital's Children's Heart Unit Fund (CHUF).

Ivan, 38, of Monkseaton, Whitley Bay, said: "I feel honoured and privileged to have been recognised for my fundraising for CHUF by David Cameron."

"It feels a little surreal to read the Prime Minister talking about you and your



■ Ivan Hollingsworth with his Point Of Light Award

family, but the increased profile it brings to CHUF and the children's heart unit at the Freeman is amazing. I want to recognise the surgeons, doctors and nurses at the Freeman, everyone who has helped our fundraising for the last five years, and most importantly my wife

Nadine and son Seb for giving me love, support and fuel to continue. Their names should be on this award also."

Dad-of-one Ivan was inspired to help the Freeman's children's heart unit after staff saved his young son's life. Seb was born in 2009 with a congenital heart condition. This resulted in him undergoing six hours of open heart surgery at 16 weeks old to save his life. Since then Ivan and his wife Nadine have tirelessly campaigned to raise funds. So far Ivan has raised £343,000.

Mr Cameron said: "Ivan is an extraordinary fundraiser, capturing the imagination with challenges that many others would not even dare to attempt. He has done a fantastic job raising money and awareness."

THE UNION BOSS

Sean McGowan, Relief Regional Organiser North for the RMT spells out the union's reasons for their upcoming strike.

Firstly, let me say with all honesty that the RMT have not and will not ever set out to cause disruption to the travelling public.

It is purely coincidental that the action called in defence of our member has coincided with a One Direction concert at the Stadium of Light, that many fans are due to attend.

The RMT has exhausted all possible avenues to settle this dispute and we are left with no other alternative than to call this action.

There are always two sides to every story and I would urge people to listen to our side and judge for themselves.

The main spokesperson for DB Regio that is urging us to call off the action is the very same person that could have, and should have, reinstated Brother Pringle at his dismissal appeal stage.

What happened to Brother Pringle should draw huge sympathy from any straight-minded person. Here is his story: Brother Pringle has given 36 years of loyal service to DB Regio and its predecessors.

Last year, Brother Pringle became seriously ill. This culminated in his GP writing a covering letter to DB Regio, clearly stating that Brother Pringle was seriously ill and unfit for all work.

DB Regio have a "Wellbeing Policy". These types of policies are designed to look at how best to manage employees back into the workplace, sound of body and mind.

DB Regio however, used this policy to effectively manage Brother Pringle out of the business, by sacking him through poor attendance due to sickness.

That is wholly and morally wrong and the RMT argue that this attack is a clear negation of DB Regio's duty of care towards Brother Pringle.

The RMT have an agreed disciplinary procedure with the company. This is the document that can be used to discipline or dismiss people if justified. To use a policy that is clearly designed to safeguard the "Wellbeing" of staff, turn that around and sack them is an outrage.

The RMT are not the bad guys here and now we have given you the other side of the story, we hope you will agree with us.

We can fully understand the anger and frustration felt by the many fans of One Direction that will be travelling to Sunderland.

However, we would urge those affected to vent that anger and frustration toward the real culprits of the disruption; DB Regio Tyne & Wear Metro.

I am very pleased to say that Brother Pringle is now back to good health and is fit enough to resume his normal duties at work. That is where he should be.

The RMT calls upon the public and the army of One Direction fans to contact DB Regio and urge them to put right the injustice they have served upon Brother Pringle.

By Brian Daniel

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THE union behind next week's Metro strike has refused an offer of independent arbitration to settle the dispute which has triggered the action.

Metro operator DB Regio yesterday said it was prepared to allow an independent arbitrator to settle its dispute with the driver representing RMT union which has led to the latter encouraging its members to strike on Wednesday.

However, the union refused the offer, saying it could not allow a third party to decide the fate of the dismissed member at the heart of the row, and that DB Regio could settle the dispute if it wanted to.

The train operator hit back by claiming the union's refusal to agree to arbitration "speaks volumes" about its ability to justify claims the member's dismissal was unfair.

As previously reported by The Chronicle, the union which represents around 40% of Metro drivers is planning the strike following the sacking of its member under DB Regio's wellbeing policy, which covers sick leave.

The action is planned on the same day as pop group One Direction play

to more than 50,000 fans at Sunderland's Stadium of Light.

The move comes on the back of an RMT strike over pay in June 2012 when Coldplay played the venue. Similar action had been planned for a Bruce Springsteen concert at the stadium later that month but this was cancelled after the pay dispute was resolved.

Talks between the two sides on Thursday failed to bring resolution - leading Metro owner Nexus to yesterday urge the parties to agree to arbitration.

In a subsequent statement, DB Regio confirmed it had offered independent arbitration to the union - only for the RMT to decline.

Sharon Kelly, the company's customer services and operations director, said: "We believe the best way to settle this is through independent arbitration, or by the RMT supporting the individual through an employment tribunal.

"However, the RMT has late this afternoon refused our offer of independent arbitration, which speaks volumes about their ability to justify their argument that this dismissal was unfair."

RMT boss Sean McGowan explained: "We hope the public can understand that to go to binding arbitration is not an option for the RMT in this case.

"Our members have a right to be protected at work by their chosen trade union and we cannot leave it up to an independent third party to decide if our member walks away still dismissed or not after 36 years worth of loyal service, purely for having undergone serious illness.

"The RMT firmly believes that DB Regio can settle this matter if they wanted to."

The union again insisted it had not planned its strike to clash with the concert. Yet both Nexus and DB Regio have accused the union of deliberately seeking to disrupt the gig and of not considering other options.

We cannot leave it up to an independent third party to decide if our member walks away still dismissed or not after 36 years of loyal service

Sean McGowan, RMT

THE NEXUS BOSS

Sharon Kelly, Customer Services and Operations Director at DBTW, which operates stations and trains on behalf of Nexus, spells out their take on the dispute

We are disappointed that the RMT has chosen to take this action, which is targeted at Metro customers - many of them children and young people - on a day they are well aware is a very busy one for the North East. The RMT has a history of staging action on the day of big regional events both here and in other parts of the country and this case is no

different.

We don't believe our dismissal process was unfair or unjust. We believe the best way to settle this is through independent arbitration, or by the RMT supporting the individual through an Employment Tribunal.

However, the RMT refused our offer of independent arbitration, which speaks volumes about their ability to justify their argument that this dismissal was unfair.

There is absolutely no need for thousands of Metro passengers to suffer and we urge the RMT to call off this needless strike.

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