

FAO Steve Barclay
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street, London
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Dear Secretary of State,

The decision on the revised pay offer at today's staff council meeting is a welcome first step in the long journey to dealing with the fundamental issues facing GMB's NHS members, including in ambulance services.

However, it is abundantly clear that unless significant action is taken on key issues, the problems facing our health service, and the people who work every day to save lives and keep the public safe, will remain.

I am writing to you on behalf of GMB members who work in the NHS including ambulance services about their ongoing concerns:

Pension Age

Ambulance workers are currently the only blue light profession to not have a lower normal retirement age.

The brutal demands of the job lead to huge numbers of ambulance workers being forced to cease work due to physical and mental health strains.

This is clearly and unreasonable situation and must be resolved.

Unsocial hours (Annex 5 and Section 2)

For ambulance workers, changes to these payments can make a big difference to their pay packet.

But the 2018 recalculation of unsociable hours payments that has left too many ambulance workers out of pocket. This issue is a barrier to promotion and must change.

Pay Review Body

The Pay Review Body, as it currently stands, is clearly unfit for purpose. We are calling for significant reform to ensure that proper pay rises, with full pay restoration to make up for over a decade of lost earnings, can be fulfilled as soon as possible.

We will not be participating in the PRB process until it is reformed.

Better funding for mental health and social care

The chronic underfunding of mental health care, and the 13 years of cuts to local government funding has left our ambulance service picking up the pieces.

For our members, 65 per cent say they deal with issues that would be better handled by mental health or social care services daily.

This needs to change so that staff and the public alike can see an NHS functioning at its best – and we can further address ambulance pressures.

We want to be involved in these conversations on behalf of health service workers.

Violence in the workplace

Too many ambulance and NHS workers face daily abuse and violence. Our survey revealed over three-quarters have experienced this.

We need to act.

While today's acceptance of the improved pay offer represents progress, much more needs to be done restore NHS workers' decade of lost earnings and provide the public with the health service they deserve.

I look forward to speaking to you about these issues in further detail soon.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Harrison
GMB National Secretary
Public Services