

Ambulance service faces 'utterly unprecedented' crisis



The ambulance service faces an 'utterly unprecedented crisis' this winter, GMB Union paramedics have told the Government.

In letters to Secretary of State, Sajid Javid and Jeremy Hunt MP, Chair of the Health Select Committee, the union raises 'serious concerns regarding the untenable workplace pressures that our members are facing in the ambulance service'.

Members describe 'the worst service pressures they have ever experienced – worse than any previous winter'.



The letter, co-signed by Steve Rice, GMB National Ambulance Representatives Committee chair and Rachel Harrison, GMB National Officer, says member concerns include:

- Increasing demands on the service and hospitals as covid cases grow alongside the 5.6 million backlog of routine hospital treatments;
- The Government's approach to covid communications since the summer and the lack of serious and clear public health communications including the need to spell out to the public what they should and should not be calling an ambulance for;
- Ongoing failures of the entire health and social care system, including pathways for social care cases, the failure of the NHS 111 to triage calls within the 60-minute deadline and the lack of GP appointments – all resulting in unnecessary emergency call outs.

GMB has this week announced it will ballot tens of thousands of NHS and ambulance workers for strike action over the 'miserable pay cut' they have been offered.

Steve Rice, Chair of GMB's National Ambulance Committee, said:

"We have serious concerns about the untenable workplace pressures our members are facing in the ambulance service.

"This is not a new reality for workers – as the pressures have been getting worse for a number of winters, over a number of years – but covid has severely exacerbated it.

"Our members are telling us the service is now under the worst service pressures they have ever experienced – worse than any previous winter – and do not feel confident things are going to get better



as we head from autumn into winter.

“The word is overused, but our members are convinced the ambulance service is facing an utterly unprecedented crisis.

“Unless rapid and serious action is taken, we now feel this winter the problems may become insurmountable.”

ENDS

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