

South Western Ambulance

Workers balloted over 'dangerous' breaks



South Western Ambulance Trust (SWAST) workers are set to be balloted over a break policy which could be dangerous.

Workers are forced to take their break wherever the nearest, often overcrowded, depot is and have been advised to carry their food in their cabs.



The union has health and safety concerns over the new policy - including the risk of food poisoning due to a lack of chilled storage and loose food and drink containers posing a risk when travelling at speed responding to an emergency.

GMB, the union for ambulance workers, has told SWAST some staff with reasonable adjustments prescribed by occupational health must be exempt from the policy - but management has so far refused to hear grievances .

The ballot is due to close on 17 May 2024 and could see members balloted formally for strike action



David McMullen, GMB Regional Organiser, said:

"GMB believes this news policy is discriminatory under the Equality Act 2010 - we've had this all but confirmed by SWAST's Chief Executive Dr John Martin [1].

"Workers face late or non-existent breaks; crews are not allowed to stop until they hand over their patients, often 7 hours or more into their shifts or sometimes even an entire working day.

"There is a real concern from GMB members this will lead to physical and mental exhaustion putting patients at risk."

"Not only is this new policy discriminatory, it is also potentially unsafe.

"GMB has submitted grievances on behalf of our members who have said they require a reasonable adjustment, but despite multiple communications from us, the trust has continually failed to respond."

"If trust management doesn't start engaging with us, I can only see this heading towards a strike which would see ambulance workers on the picket line."



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Member requiring help?

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