



Low paid ambulance staff being put at covid risk by trust's two-tier PPE policy

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Don't discriminate against the lowest paid crew members and treat both sides of the service equally

GMB, the North East's biggest general union, says low paid ambulance workers are being put at risk by their trust's two-tier policy towards PPE.

The union says the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) is playing fast and loose with covid safety by prioritising higher paid staff and leaving lowest paid frontline ambulance workers with the most basic of masks.

NEAS utilises two different services; unscheduled care, the blue light emergence service who respond to urgent cases and accidents and scheduled care, who perform the patient transport role to and from hospital to home and residential care for non-urgent cases.

Both the services deal with covid positive patients daily, yet only the 'blue light' crew members have an acceptable level of protection that they can use.

Public Health England (PHE) has issued guidance that a fluid resistant surgical mask is suitable protection – but GMB has questioned this methodology, given a recent survey of more than 1,500 ambulance workers suggested one in three has now contracted the virus, likely whilst doing their job.



Michael Hunt, GMB Regional Organiser, said:

“NEAS is playing fast and loose with covid safety and has hid behind the most basic of PHE guidance on masks.

“They’ve had to be dragged into providing higher quality masks.

“However, they are not giving these masks to lower paid front line ambulance crews.

"GMB welcomes blue light crews being protected, but this has caused a problem of parity and a serious health and safety concern as the lower paid patient transfer crews don't have access to these high-level masks.

“NEAS has declined our request for them to be issued. Why won't NEAS issue all employees with high-level masks and stop discriminating against the lowest paid crew members?"