



Tougher action needed as emergency worker attacks revealed

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GMB, the union for public service workers, has said arrests over attacks on emergency workers need to be matched by prosecutions, tougher sentencing and culture change.

The call comes as new figures obtained by BBC show police across England and Wales have made more than 6,500 arrests for attacks on emergency service workers.

GMB last year ran the successful Protect the Protectors campaign to change the law as MPs Holly Lynch and Chris Bryant successfully spearheaded its passage through Parliament.

“ It’s welcome to see arrests taking place but we also want to see an increase in prosecutions and tougher sentences handed down for these unacceptable assaults. Facing violence at work should never be considered just part of the job.

Rachel Harrison, GMB National Officer

The Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 came into effect on 13 November 2018.

The union’s 2018 report In Harm’s Way revealed a 34% increase in physical assaults recorded by Ambulance Trusts in just three years.



The legal change ensured it would become a specific criminal offence in England to assault an emergency service worker, and attacking an emergency worker will be an aggravating factor for sentencing purposes - including for sexual assaults.

The union said more prosecutions and tougher sentences must be accompanied by culture change and support from government and employers.

Rachel Harrison, GMB National Officer said:

“GMB’s campaign was key in securing legislation changes to protect our emergency service workers from violent assaults at work.

“It’s welcome to see arrests taking place but we also want to see an increase in prosecutions and tougher sentences handed down for these unacceptable assaults.

“The new law is only going to work if it is applied fully - that will be the deterrent that is much needed to really protect our members.

“Our members should not be expected to go to work to help people only to be attacked. We want to see government and employers putting real procedures and protections in place to prevent attacks.

“We know that, by itself, a change of the law isn’t enough. These new provisions must be enforced, and the culture in NHS Trusts has to change

“Facing violence at work should never be considered just part of the job.”

