



KL/DMcK

11 January 2019

**Sent By Email**

Ms Jeane Freeman MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport  
The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

You will recall that GMB Scotland rejected the Scottish Government's pay offer for staff in the National Health Service which was agreed with our sister trades unions. As you know, our objection to the offer was partly about the undefined, at that time, reforms to terms and conditions which were interlinked to the pay offer.

You will also be aware that the Scottish Terms and Conditions Committee for NHS Scotland (STAC) has now reported with its recommendations for reform. Given the rejection by our members of the interlinked offer which included reforms to conditions it is clear that our members will want to fully consider the impact that any changes may have on them. As such, and as a democratic trades union, led by our lay members, GMB Scotland will ballot our members to ascertain their attitude towards the issues which has been highlighted by STAC, as you would I am sure expect us to do.

It has come to my attention that management within the Scottish Ambulance Service will not support the necessary time off for carrying out trades union duties being granted to our representatives to conduct our ballot. I have written already to SAS and they have confirmed to me their position which is apparently that balloting duties will only be accommodated within other existing agreed time. Clearly, this is not acceptable and appears to suggest that SAS management are wholly unaware of the work that is already done during this time to support our members and to ensure the good conduct of orderly industrial relations with the employer.

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I will obviously be discussing with our union lawyers the implications of the attitude we are facing from SAS management in terms of Section 168 of the Trade Union Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. However, given the importance and prominence which the Scottish Government have placed on supporting time for trades union duties I trust that you will want to contact SAS and make clear that their position is neither sustainable nor conducive to positive relationships between our representatives and SAS management.

I am grateful for your help in assisting SAS managers to see sense on this issue and I know that you will be keen that they avoid the impression that industrial democracy is to be supported when it is endorsing government policy but should be obstructed when trades union members takes a democratic decision to reject an offer.

I am also sending a copy of this letter to your colleague, Jamie Hepburn, in his capacity as Minister for Fair Work.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,



*Karen Leonard*  
GMB Scotland Organiser

c.c. Jamie Hepburn, Minister for Fair Work