Pauline Howie

Chief Executive

Scottish Ambulance Service

Dear Pauline

Re: Personal protective equipment (PPE)

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chief Executive of the Scottish Ambulance

Service.

I am sure that you are focussed on doing all you can to protect the health, safety and

welfare of your staff during these extremely challenging times. However, over the last

week or so many of our members have been telling us they are very concerned about

the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) available to them when they are

dealing with patients suspected of having Covid-19.

I know this is not an ambulance specific issue - there are national and international

pressures on PPE equipment - but we don’t expect, even during this national

emergency, that Scottish Ambulance Staff should be at greater risk than the public

generally.

Ambulance staff work in an uncontrolled environment which adds to the risks they

face. I am sure that the Scottish Ambulance Service understands their responsibilities

under the Health at Safety at Work Act to carry out suitable and sufficient risk

assessments. These risk assessments will include the provision of Personal Protective

Equipment for situations where the risks to health & safety cannot be adequately

controlled in other ways.

However, UNISON does not believe that these messages are getting across to the

frontline workers who are expected to treat and manage patients. So we are asking

you as an ambulance service employer to:

1. Carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments to keep staff safe

 Give staff access to those risk assessments to give them confidence and

reassure them that everything is being done to keep them as safe as

possible.

2. Explain clearly to staff the scientific evidence employers are using when they

make decisions about the provision and use of PPE.

3. Make sure staff can access the correct PPE for the work they are doing.

4. Provide suitable and effective training and instruction to staff on how to use PPE.

5.Follow national and local infection control guidelines.

6. Give staff clear instructions on what to do in the event of PPE not being available.

 Support staff to report problems with PPE and ensure recording and investigation of incidents

UNISON will continue to constructively raise issues of concern around the health, safety and welfare of our members and are always willing to work with employers to find ways to support staff in these difficult times.

In order that we can move forward constructively and provide our members and the wider staff group with an element of reassurance I would welcome a response to the bullet points set out above.

Kind Regards

Steven Gilroy

UNISON National Convenor