

# News story: Paramedics to be given body cameras to protect them from abuse

Paramedics will be given body cameras as part of a new wellbeing pledge ahead of the NHS's 70th birthday.

NHS employers will also introduce fast-access systems to speed up access to free mental health support and physiotherapy for their staff.

The measures are part of the 10-year plan that the NHS will agree over the next 6 months as part of the [planned £20.5 billion increase to NHS funding by 2023](#). The measures aim to:

- reduce cases of physical and verbal abuse against the most at risk NHS workers
- help staff manage their own health and return to work faster after illness, allowing more patients to be treated

In an initial pilot, 465 ambulances and their paramedics will be equipped with body cameras, with potential for a full rollout to all paramedics, and other priority areas.

The NHS is the UK's largest employer with over 1.5 million staff, caring for a million patients every 24 hours. It is recognised as one of the most respected institutions in the UK, yet over 15% of NHS staff have experienced physical violence from patients, or their families, during the past year.

In the past year, 354 prosecutions have been brought against individuals who have subjected ambulance staff to violence – but estimates suggest this is a fraction of the total incidents.

Health and Social Care secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Nobody should feel unsafe at work – abuse against healthcare workers goes against everything the NHS stands for. Whilst the buck must stop with abusers, we want to do everything we can to prevent physical and verbal abuse. Issuing paramedics with body cameras will help protect them and increase prosecutions.

The NHS is consistently rated as the thing that makes us most proud to be British, but it's not the institution or buildings that the public are so passionate about, it's the people on the frontline that care for them in their hour of need. Demand for NHS services has been soaring in recent years as our population has aged and increased, staff have been under huge pressure and have never worked harder.

In these challenging circumstances, they need to know that the NHS is striving to be the best employer it can be – particularly when supporting the mental health of staff.

Ruth May, Executive Director of Nursing, NHS Improvement said:

The NHS's greatest asset is its people: frontline staff and managers who often work in highly stressful and challenging circumstances so that people get the safe and high quality care they deserve.

In order to secure the future of the NHS and what it stands for, we must strive to be the very best employer. This means looking after our staff and supporting their health and wellbeing. This will also enable them to deliver the best care possible, both now and in future.