



Jeane Freeman  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport  
St Andrews House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021

Dear Jeane

### **Vaccinations**

We are writing to request that the decision to delay giving the second dose of the vaccine to Scottish Ambulance Service Staff is reversed with immediate effect. We believe the risk to life of staff contracting the virus, the ability of the service to function effectively and therefore the risk to the public we serve is too high to do otherwise.

An article published in the BMJ on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021 "Covid-19 vaccination: What's the evidence for extending the dosing interval? "The BMJ highlights the risks of a proposed 12-week gap."

In a joint statement Pfizer and BioNTech said, "There is no data to demonstrate that protection after the first dose is sustained after 21 days".

"The European Medicines Agency has said that the gap between the first and second doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine should not exceed 42 days.

The majority of our front facing staff have received the first dose of the vaccine, with many staff overdue to receive their second dose based on the advised gap of 21-day.

However, the information and evidence we have is showing the single dose is not offering appropriate protection and or having the effect anticipated by the JCVI and the Government.

If we consider the figures published by Public Health Scotland Glasgow City (highest rates per 100,000 in Scotland) 310:100,000 compared to roughly extrapolated figures for the Scottish Ambulance Service (operating with PPE, and first vaccination) of 1,700: 100, 000 for patient facing staff. If we include all staff, this produces an overall figure of in excess of 2,000: 100,000.

Additionally, absence rates within the service remain at critically high levels, Covid absences alone are sitting at just over 8%, with an overall figure sitting at around 13 to 14 % mark

For the week ending the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021 the active number of positive cases rose to 164, an increase of 14 on the previous week, taking positive absence % from 2.68% to 2.93%. Last week's positive cases were 80 higher than the peak number of cases experienced during the first wave. This brings the total number of staff with a positive case recorded since the pandemic began to 633 as of last week.

Despite raising concerns staff feel their voices are not being heard. There is no doubt that we are near a tipping point and if staff do not receive the protection a second dose can give then the service could collapse.

At present, as part of what we consider to be the best Ambulance Service in the UK, despite the challenges they face, our members continue to provide lifesaving prehospital care. However, there are ever growing fears as to how long this will continue to be the case. We do not want to end up in a position that other Ambulance Services in the UK have found themselves in where they have Police and Firefighters driving front line vehicles.

We believe there is an immediate need to re asses risk to both staff and service delivery, we further believe that in doing so the evidence will show there are clear grounds to provide ambulance staff with their second dose of the vaccine now.

We believe providing staff with the second dose of the vaccine would ensure the Ambulance Service is able to provide the people of Scotland with the best possible care available during these unprecedented times.

The Scottish Ambulance Service is an integral part of a fully functioning NHS, we believe the risks we have demonstrated have highlighted a one size fits all approach does not effectively protect our members or the services ability to function.

We look forward to an early response



**UNISON Convener**



**GMB Convener**

**c.c.** Karren Leonard, GBM Organiser  
David O'Connor, UNISON Regional Organiser