

**Written evidence from the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives  
(AACE) Written Evidence for the Women & Equalities Committee with input  
from The Ambulance Staff Charity (TASC) [EOV0011]**

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This evidence responds to the question, *“To what extent is there evidence that escalating behaviours is a particular problem within the emergency services and other public sector organisations?”*

## **Introduction**

1. The Association of Ambulance Chief Executives provides ambulance services with a central organisation that supports, coordinates, and implements nationally agreed policy. It also provides the general public and other stakeholders with a central resource of information about NHS ambulance services. Whether for patient care, operational policy or emergency preparedness, the Association exists to support its members and to act as the interface between them and their stakeholders. (AACE, 2023)
2. The Association of Ambulance Chief Executives is a key point of contact with the ambulance services' main partner agencies at national level – in particular the [Department of Health & Social Care](#), [NHS England & Improvement](#), [Health Education England](#), the [NHS Confederation](#), [NHS Providers](#), the [National Police Chiefs Council](#) and the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#). (AACE, 2023)
3. Building on the work of the Ambulance Chief Executives Group (ACEG), the Association enables Chief Executives to have a greater say in national policy development. (AACE, 2023)
4. Since April 2023, AACE has supported a 3 phase 4 nation project called 'Reducing Misogyny & Improving Sexual Safety in the Ambulance Service' initiated by [Suzanne Rastrick](#), Chief Allied Health Professions Officer for England and the outcome of this work will be published in October 2023. Whilst progress has been made throughout ambulance services in addressing concerns of a sexual nature, this work seeks to complement measures already in place at a local level and address inconsistencies in how the sector is responding to related concerns.
5. The [Ambulance Staff Charity \(TASC\)](#) provide a range of services to support the mental health, physical rehabilitation, and financial wellbeing of the UK's ambulance staff, their family members, students, and ambulance service volunteers.

6. Ambulance Services have a strong hierarchy and cultural norms (including fraternal traditions) reflective of other uniformed services.

### **Increasing Concerns**

7. Ambulance Services throughout the UK are seeing an increase in concerns of a misogynistic or sexual nature, hence the urgency of taking a proactive and collective stance as a sector.
8. The campaign [Ambulance Voices](#) was launched in March 2023 and stories of lived experiences from ambulance staff highlight student paramedics as a vulnerable group who are reporting a lack of safety whilst on placement. Descriptions shared, present a concerning pattern of abuse of power and the need for improved education, awareness and reporting processes that provide an alternative route of support away from the 'chain of command'.
9. Insight from across the ambulance sector tells us that although nobody is exempt from experiencing any form of bullying or harassment, sexual harassment is a problem disproportionately affecting female staff. Other intelligence collected via staff networks and survivor leaders is highlighting how the increase in extreme misogyny, and increasingly accessible unethical pornography may be influencing the values of staff at work. Additionally, there are ample social media sites such as ['UK Ambulance Humour'](#) that normalise discriminatory banter and risk creating a high level of acceptance of inappropriate and unprofessional behaviours in the workplace.
10. Media attention to the subject of sexual harassment in ambulance services is escalating and an online search of related coverage presents [various news stories](#).
11. The Ambulance Staff Charity (TASC) have cited related concerns in a recent analysis of their data which consisted of 133 service users (68.75% female) throughout 11 ambulance services, and these include reports of workplace sexual harassment, victimisation, sexually inappropriate behaviours at work and domestic abuse perpetrated by partner in the service. (TASC, Report of the instances of Sexual Insecurity, 2023)

### **Concluding Points**

- As a sector, we are experiencing an increase of related concerns, improving our understanding of patterns of behaviour and the more proactive we are, the more we are uncovering about the experiences of our workforce both past and present.
- Themes from multiple sources include abuse of power, the student voice, normalised discrimination masked as banter, an overlap with domestic abuse and the need for more resourcing support to address cultural challenges.

- Our learning to date demonstrates that sexual harassment (both non-recent and recent) can escalate to more serious offences, is predominantly colleague towards colleague perpetrated and is disproportionately affecting female staff.
- Improving sexual safety and reducing misogyny is a priority for AACE – we look forward to the publication of our cross-organisational work in October, as referenced above, and continuing to proactively address and effectively respond at national and local levels.

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