

# SWAAHB AGM

## Assistant Branch Secretary Report

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## **2025/26 Summary**

### **Secured Paid Time for Mandatory Training**

After challenging the CEO, John Martin, on the practice of unpaid mandatory training, we secured agreement that this time must now be paid. Senior management also agreed to stop disciplinary meetings for low compliance levels. Instead, managers will hold supportive conversations to explore the barriers colleagues face and work with them to find solutions. The agreed paid time has not yet been formally integrated, resulting in variable practice across counties; I am hopeful that the outcome of a collective grievance in one county will expedite the formal integration of paid time for all for mandatory training.

### **Improved Pay Structure and Career Pathway for EMDs**

After more than 18 months of persistence, we achieved Trust sign-off for a new pay structure for EMDs, to be implemented this summer. This includes:

- movement to a higher pay band, improving financial security
  - the creation of a *Senior EMD* role, reducing expectations to work outside scope and introducing more varied responsibilities
- This has been a long-standing request from our members and a major win.

### **Raised National Awareness of Mental Health Pressures**

With Alice and George, I submitted a motion to National Health Conference calling for stronger sector wide mental health support. Following a particularly difficult year for mental health in SWAST, we pushed the Trust to acknowledge that crisis point intervention is not enough. They have responded positively to our call for support from day one.

We continue to work on a campaign rooted in better mental health provision, to engage our current members and recruit new ones

### **Rolling Relief Balances: Launched a Campaign to Resolve the Freeze**

On 1 April 2025, the Trust froze all rolling relief (RR) balances pending a review. Members were left distressed — either unable to access positive hours or anxious about potential repayments.

After nine months, the Trust began issuing balances and repayment proposals, but the process is unacceptably slow and is anticipated to take at least another 18 months to complete.

As a Branch Management Group we launched a campaign supporting members to submit individual grievances, which overwhelmed the Trust to the point that they've now opted to hear the issue as a *collective grievance*. This is a strong organising opportunity for the Branch, and we are using it fully.

### **Improved Retire and Return Arrangements**

After identifying that SWAST was an outlier compared with other ambulance trusts, I challenged the existing retire and return terms. Initially rejected, but after highlighting the benefits, the Trust agreed to improved arrangements.

From 1 April 2026:

- staff retiring and returning will retain their accrued annual leave and sickness benefits
  - staff who have already retired and returned will have these benefits reinstated
- Members have responded extremely positively to this win.

## **Pushed for Fairer, More Flexible Working Options**

In late 2025, I surveyed our members' experiences of SWAST's flexible working process. Key themes included:

- inconsistent outcomes for similar requests
- disparity between Occupational Health recommendations and panel decisions
- systematic breaches of statutory timeframes

The Trust accepted these findings and is developing a pilot scheme to improve flexibility at local level.

The Branch has also strengthened its understanding of tribunal time limits relating to flexible working. We have already taken one case to ACAS and expect another to follow, with the Trust likely to offer settlement for failing statutory requirements.

## **Continued Leadership on Sexual Safety in the Workplace**

We recognised that our reps often supported alleged perpetrators but rarely received referrals from victims. I proposed changes to the Sexual Safety Manager's Toolkit to ensure victims are directed to their union for support. Work continues to push for improved and differentiated learning around sexual safety, rather than a "one size fits all" approach.

I spoke about our positive partnership working in this space at the inaugural NASPF Sexual Safety Day in London in 2025 and have been invited to speak again in Leeds later this year.

## **Member Recruitment & Retention**

I attended orientation days, workplace drop-ins, and hospital ambulance bay sessions to recruit new members and engage with existing ones. These sessions have been invaluable for understanding the issues that matter most to members — including those employed by private providers — and supporting organising activity.

## **Campaign to Reduce the Retirement Age for Ambulance Staff**

Alongside the Ambulance Occupational Group, we launched a campaign to reduce the retirement age for ambulance staff. The Branch contributed to the cost of the research project underpinning this work. The membership has responded strongly to the initial survey, and the results will guide the next phase of the campaign.

## **A year like no other.....**

This has been an exceptionally busy year. Alongside the major achievements above, I have continued casework, policy reviews, work related to ongoing organisational change, and support for our wider rep network.

It has also been a very rewarding year. I am genuinely grateful to be part of this Branch, where we are able to make a positive difference for our members.