



Paramedic's £5,000 payout for trauma of his work

A former paramedic has been awarded around £5,000 after suing the ambulance service claiming daily scenes of death and injury left him with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Philip Howe, 45, said he was forced to give up his £19,000-a-year job after his employers failed to provide proper support.

As part of the settlement announced yesterday, a week before the case was due to go to court, neither side will talk about the award and the ambulance service did not have to admit liability. The case could benefit almost 50 paramedics suing ambulance services in claims which could cost the Health Service £10million.

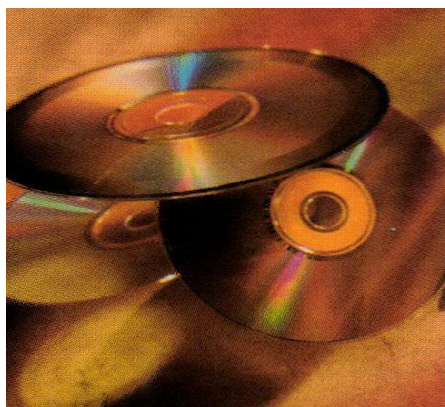
Mr Howe, who is from Stockport and now works as a driving instructor, left Greater Manchester Ambulance Service in November 1999. He claimed that the long hours, few breaks and difficult conditions had made him ill. Speaking before the claim was settled, he said: 'I thought I had a job for life. I absolutely loved it. But it changed dramatically. The pressure I and others were under made life impossible.' Mr Howe refused to go into details about the compensation or the nature of his illness.

A spokesman for GMAS said: 'A settlement without admission of liability has been reached between our insurers and the claimant. In accordance with the settlement, no further comment is to be made.'

Stephanie Thomas, a spokesman for the public service union Unison, said: 'Greater Manchester Ambulance Service has an in-house counselling service that is excellent and this was in place when Mr Howe was working for them. 'We were surprised a case was even brought against the ambulance service. Obviously this will not set a legal precedent-because it never got to court.'

Psychiatrists have claimed that post-traumatic stress disorder has been used by some claimants primarily for financial gain. Scotland Yard Commissioner Sir John Stevens has previously attacked police officers who use the system to get big payouts. The total cost to the Metropolitan Police this year is expected to top £1million.

Another former paramedic, Gary Maddock, 46, from Middlesbrough, is suing his former employers for £550,000, mostly for loss of earnings but including £100,000 damages for personal injury. Now unemployed after 18 years as a paramedic, Mr Maddock says he suffers flashbacks, mood swings and depression.



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