



Meeting with Richard Hunt-Chair, London Ambulance Service

March 26th 2012

Forum representative: Joseph Healy, Chair; Lynn Strother, Vice Chair;
Malcolm Alexander, Vice Chair

We met with Richard Hunt to discuss the Forum's complaint about the apparent gradual diminishing importance given by the LAS Trust board to public involvement, the lack of time given over to discussion of public concerns at Trust Board meetings and a reduced emphasis on public involvement when key decisions are made.

Richard Hunt, the Chair of LAS, had proposed this meeting with Forum members to find a way forward.

Richard said that the LAS is committed to an ongoing relationship with the Patients' Forum and regards the Patients' Forum as a key stakeholder. He said that there was some pressure was being put on the LAS Board to redesign the configuration of its Board meetings by separating the voting members of the Board from those who do not vote – the emphasis of the SHA, for example, being on decision making as a clear and transparent process. He said that the process of moving towards Foundation Trust status places additional duties to abide by a new Board Governance Assurance Framework.

We described the changes which have happened over a period of two years, resulting in a steady reduction of Forum involvement in Board meetings - from full participation in 'part one' business to virtually no involvement. We said that this approach was inconsistent with the government's commitment to putting patients at the centre of NHS decision making. We added that as an act of simple humanity, running Board meetings in public lasting three hours, which excluded Patients' Forum involvement until the end of three hours was unacceptable.

We also expressed our concern that our contribution to Quality Accounts was ignored by the LAS and that this was inconsistent with the LAS's duty in relation Quality Accounts, the policy of the government on public involvement and the expectations of the National Quality Board. Richard said that there had been no intention to exclude this type of input.

Richard said that the LAS was very focussed on becoming a Foundation Trust, which it has not yet managed to do despite having a very good year in relation to meeting targets and expending huge resources on the task. He said that the LAS had to achieve a process of decisive decision making and this was still work in progress. He said that meetings of the Foundation Trust Board will be held in public when the LAS achieves Foundation

Trust status. Richard added that communicating with the public was an essential role for the Foundation Trust.

We described our extensive community networks which could be made available to the LAS and the importance of using these networks to discuss and debate key elements of LAS policy, e.g. the Older Person's Strategy.

We discussed the sharing of critical information about key problems faced by the LAS, e.g. turnaround times, and the important networks that the Forum has to raise these issues locally through LINKs and local branches of voluntary sector organisations.

We agreed to the following:

- Improve the sharing of critical information about issues which reduce the effectiveness of LAS services, e.g. turnaround times.
- Richard Hunt offered to address a public meeting of the Patient Forum.
- We agreed that we would field questions to the Board in advance wherever possible so that our questions can be dealt with fully by the Board.
- Richard Hunt will examine the operation of Board meetings with the aim of being more inclusive.

Note agreed between Forum and Richard Hunt.