

PATIENTS' FORUM

FOR THE LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE

21/1/2015-

Dear Lord Howe,

I have just heard Jeremy Hunt's comments on the strike of paramedics, which is planned for next week and I wanted to comment as a lay person who has led the Patients' Forum for the London Ambulance Service for the past 10 years. The Forum is entirely independent of the LAS, unions and seeks only to represent patients' views.

I regard the Secretary of State's comments about potentially imposing restrictions on strike action by paramedics as tragically unhelpful. Although the 'tough' approach may have some political currency in terms of dealing with the current crisis in ambulance services, it sends entirely the wrong message to paramedics. There are already 400 vacancies in London's ambulance service and the response of paramedics to Secretary of State's comments is likely to be anger and far more resignations.

Please tell the Secretary of State that he needs to show leadership to ambulance staff, not to make threats. They are under huge pressure and are working 12 hour shifts saving the lives of our family and friends. They are dedicated people who are literally the front line at the point when people suffer cardiac arrest, stroke and major trauma. We need these people desperately. There is currently a vacuum of leadership, and Secretary of State could transform this situation by showing that he values paramedics and by providing a way forward in terms of career progression, pay and the relentless pressure on the front line.

In my view the Secretary of State's approach is likely to result in the tragic loss of lives as the workforce shrinks further and more people wait longer periods for vital paramedic care and treatment.

Please tell the Secretary of State that the great advances made with the Duty of Candour, Revalidation of Doctors and the Staffs Inquiry, need to be matched by more sophisticated and progressive thinking on securing a safe and effective paramedic workforce.

I hope you will see these comments as a way forward in the desperate circumstances we now face in front line emergency care.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Alexander', written in a cursive style.

Malcolm Alexander
Chair
Patients' Forum for the London Ambulance Service

WWW.Patientsforumlas.net