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Sent electronically only

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Chair
Patients' Forum for the LAS

Trust Executive Office

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Chief Executive

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Dear Malcolm

Thank you for your recent letter inviting me to attend your forum on 9 April.

Unfortunately I am not able to attend on this occasion but wanted to assure you that at Barts Health we are working incredibly hard to make sure patients get timely care at our emergency departments. This includes working with numerous partners, including London Ambulance Service, to make sure patients are seen quickly when they arrive at the hospital in an ambulance.

Whilst all of our staff work extremely hard to ensure that patients are seen and treated as quickly and safely as possible, in common with other NHS providers, we have been coping with increased patient demand for our services.

One of the most important issues is making sure there is capacity across the hospital so that beds are available for those who need them. This isn't just about performance in the emergency department – there needs to be beds available in other parts of the hospital so that when people need to be admitted into our care they can be without causing a delay for others arriving in the emergency department. That's why we have rolled out an on-the-job training programme across our sites to ensure that patients are moved through our hospitals as swiftly and safely as possible, so they can be discharged promptly and free up space for others who need treatment. By reducing the length of time patients stay in hospital, and preventing transfers of care from being delayed, we can optimise bed occupancy so there is sufficient spare capacity for periods of increased demand.

In the busier periods, we do have a clear escalation plan in place for the emergency department, and we hold regular monthly meetings with both the London Ambulance Service and East of England Ambulance service to actively manage our handover processes. We work jointly to see if more can be done for those patients who attend regularly and we review if any patients have been brought in by ambulance and discharged with no treatment so we can educate staff as appropriate.



There are numerous examples of developments at our hospitals that are helping us to cope with the increased demand and provide our patients with the best possible care:

- Our physician response unit, in partnership with London Ambulance Service and London's Air Ambulance, takes the emergency department on the road and has freed up the hospital for those in most need. Staffed with senior emergency care doctors and ambulance crew members, the unit is able to treat and discharge people in the community rather than taking them to hospital.
- We've introduced Fit to Sit – a new initiative where patients are transferred from ambulance trolleys to allow them to be in a wheelchair and therefore be seen quickly and safely in a part of the emergency department more suitable to their needs.
- We redesigned our ambulatory care unit and built a new urgent care centre streaming area at Whipps Cross, where we are able to prioritise any walk in ambulance handovers, further reducing delays as a result.
- We've been getting support from the Emergency Care Improvement Programme (ECIP) - a clinically led programme which offers intensive practical help for emergency departments and we look forward to working with them and our local partners to make further improvements.

Although this winter has undoubtedly been challenging, we believe our efforts and those of our partners are helping us to improve waiting times for patients. Across our hospitals between December and February we saw a 6% increase in attendances at our hospitals compared with last year, yet 11% more people were seen and admitted or discharged within four hours.

Thank you again for your invitation and I hope you have a productive conversation at the Forum.

Yours sincerely

Alwen Williams

Alwen Williams
Chief Executive

