



Malcolm Alexander
Chair
Patients' Forum for the London Ambulance Service
30c, Portland Rise
London N4 2PP

MoJ ref: ADR068335

17th May 2019

Dear Mr. Alexander,

LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE – PRISON ESTABLISHMENT CALL-OUTS

Thank you for your letters of 19 March and 16 April to Rory Stewart MP about collaboration between the prison and ambulance services, and the safeguarding of detained persons. I am sorry you have not received an earlier reply.

You raise concerns about safeguarding of vulnerable detainees in adult custodial establishments. Her Majesty's Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) recognises that the level of protection offered to prisoners should be equivalent to that provided in the community. Given the very different circumstances, it is necessary to have different arrangements for vulnerable adults in custody, to keep them safe and protect them from abuse and neglect. Prisons have a range of processes in place to ensure that this duty is met. Engagement is encouraged between prison governors and Safeguarding Adults Boards, and there is a range of independent bodies which scrutinise the effectiveness of safeguarding measures: HM Inspectorate of Prisons conducts regular inspections; the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman oversees the complaints process and undertakes investigations to satisfy herself that the internal complaints process has been conducted satisfactorily; and each local prison and removal centre has an Independent Monitoring Board which monitors day-to-day life in the establishment and ensures that proper standards of care and decency are maintained. In addition, prison health and social care services are regulated by the Care Quality Commission.

You are also concerned about waiting times for ambulances to gain access to prisons. It is clearly important that when a prisoner requires urgent medical attention, the ambulance crew is able to enter the establishment as quickly as possible. A national Memorandum of Understanding has been drawn up between HMPPS and the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives on access for emergency vehicles and their crews to prisons and young offender institutions. One of its three operational objectives is to facilitate immediate access and egress of emergency vehicles to establishments, wherever possible, without compromising security.

In response to your recent Freedom of Information request, it was explained that to obtain the information you were seeking about waiting times, it would be necessary to cross-reference records from the control room and the gate room, together with prisoner escort records, at each of the prisons. This would be a labour-intensive process and the cost of undertaking it would considerably exceed the maximum amount specified in the Freedom of Information Act. While we cannot provide you with these figures, HMPPS would be able to investigate any specific incidents about which you have concerns.

You may also find it helpful to meet with HMPPS officials to discuss these issues and the best way forward. If you would like a meeting to be arranged, please contact Christopher Barnett-Page in the Safer Custody Team (christopher.barnett-page@noms.qsi.gov.uk; telephone: 07966 114779).

Yours sincerely,
Robert Buckland

ROBERT BUCKLAND QC MP

PS. You rightly raise a serious issue; I am keen for you to meet officials so that progress can be made!