**London Bridge inquest: police waited for help that wasn’t coming**

In ‘chaotic’ conditions, officers were unaware paramedics had been told to stay out of area

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LAS received 134 calls the night of the London Bridge attack, its operation director told the Old Bailey. Photograph: Carmen Fishwick/The Guardian

Communication issues resulted in police and members of the public being left to treat victims of the London Bridge terror attacks and not knowing why paramedics were not coming to their aid, a London Ambulance Service boss has said.

The inquest into the deaths of eight people heard that at least two LAS staff knew there were casualties in the vicinity of the Boro Bistro courtyard below street level on the night of 3 June 2017.

One shouted down from Borough High Street above to a police officer at 10.24pm telling him medical help was coming soon, but when paramedics were told to evacuate the area, the officers in the courtyard were left treating the casualties on their own awaiting help that did not arrive.

Paul Woodrow, LAS operations director, was asked by Jonathan Hough QC, counsel to the inquest, on Monday: “Could any more have been done to ensure that these officers, that these people in the courtyard were told London ambulance staff couldn’t get to them?”

Woodrow replied: “Clearly there were communication issues in relation to people who were below street level in terms of understanding where resources were. I accept that.”

But he said the issues had to be seen in the context of the “chaotic conditions” prevailing on the night.

“We received 134 calls … we had patients that were severely injured in lots of locations in that area [Borough Market],” he told the Old Bailey.

Five people died in or around the courtyard, one of whom, Sebastian Belanger, 36, a French chef, could possibly have been saved if he had received swifter, higher-quality medical attention, the inquest has heard.

Paramedics were told by armed police to leave the area above the courtyard, and other LAS staff did not go in because they considered it to be a “hot zone”, where the armed attackers could still have been at large. The first paramedics to enter the courtyard did so after 1am, when it was still technically a hot zone but they nevertheless decided to go in to search for casualties.

Gareth Patterson QC, representing six of the victims’ families, said: “There was insufficient urgency and the processes were insufficient for getting [victims] out of that courtyard.” He said an LAS debriefing report showed paramedics were frustrated at not being deployed earlier

In the meantime, police officers had begun bringing some of the victims to street level at about 10.45pm. Patterson said the failure of communication meant the officers delayed bringing casualties up the stairs because they assumed help was on its way. As well as not being told why paramedics were not coming down to the courtyard, the officers were also not informed that ambulances were parked a short distance away on Borough High Street, the court has heard.

Woodrow said his staff did “a fantastic job in very difficult circumstances” but accepted there were improvements that could be made. These included better technology, including drones, to locate victims and to communicate the location of ambulances to other members of the emergency services. He also agreed with Hough that having at least one senior LAS official in the Met’s special operations room, which deals with such major incidents, could help improve communications between the emergency services.