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Our Ref: JK/AlexanderM

Mr Malcolm Alexander  
Chairman  
Patients' Forum Ambulance Services (London)

**By email only**

24 October 2014

Dear Malcolm,

**Contracting of Private Ambulance Services**

I am writing in response to your recent question about whether *"the Board [is] satisfied that it is exercising appropriate and adequate governance over the contracting of private ambulance companies to provide responses to Cat A and Cat C calls e.g. in relation to the use of HCPC registered staff, training equivalent to that received by LAS staff, access to all required equipment, and learning from harms, complaints and clinical guidelines"*. As you know I was asked to address this matter for you outside of the Board meeting and I am sorry that I have not been in a position to reply to you before now.

It may initially be helpful to explain that the Trust currently has four private providers working for us in frontline operations. These are X9, Medical Services, ERS and St John Ambulance. All four providers are registered by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and are deployed across London to predominantly category C calls.

Each private provider deploys an ambulance and crew which is equivalent to that of the London Ambulance Service (LAS). The lead clinician will have a minimum grade of Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). Our contracts with private providers specify that equipment, and the medication stocked on board the ambulance, is to the same level as a core LAS ambulance.

All crews follow the Joint Royal Colleges Ambulance Liaison Committee (JRCALC) national ambulance guidelines and receive an LAS familiarisation and orientation training package to prepare them for working around London.

I can assure you that LAS maintains a list of all clinicians and staff who are approved to work with our private providers. We also ensure that they are checked by the disclosure and barring service (previously known as the criminal records bureau) and have completed relevant safeguarding training. All of these approved clinicians have been issued with an LAS reference number so that we can audit individual performance and delivery of care.



In order to further strengthen these arrangements, we appointed a dedicated paramedic in June 2014 to oversee all of the frontline private provider contracts. Based at our headquarters in Waterloo, this role ensures that we monitor the providers' clinical care delivery, contract adherence and operational performance.

Our private providers use standard LAS patient report forms (PRFs) and all of their completed paperwork is scanned into our standard management information system and robustly audited by a team of operation supervisors and clinical team leaders. This process allows us to monitor the standard of patient care delivery, specifically across our high risk areas and in line with some specific care bundles. Positive and negative feedback is fed back to the provider. Any areas of concern (such as the need for re-training) can be raised immediately with the provider and the Trust reserves the right to remove any clinician who is failing to demonstrate the high level of care expected.

It is also worth mentioning that on-shift support is provided to all private providers via the clinical hub which is embedded within the emergency operations centre (EOC). This allows clinicians to discuss their incidents with an LAS Clinical Team Leader at any time and helps to support their decision making process. It is also a requirement that private providers cannot discharge care from the scene (not convey) without having first discussed the onward care plan with the clinical hub.

Further support is available to private providers via the intelligence conveyance desk which is able to advise on care centre suitability and capacity across London.

Finally, LAS hosts monthly face to face contract review meetings with each of our private providers. This ensures that we are able to review the previous month's performance and address any areas of concern. We will continue to review our governance processes as we go forward and enter into the 2015 re-tender process for private ambulance provision.

I hope that the above information will help to assure you that LAS is exercising appropriate and robust governance over the contracting of private ambulance providers. Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries or require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Killens'.

**Jason Killens**  
Director of Operations