

Friday 6th April 2018

Malcolm Alexander
Chair
Patients' Forum for the LAS
PatientsforumLAS@aol.com

Dear Mr Alexander,

Thank you for your letter of 15th March. I appreciate your concern about the ambulance queues outside London's A&E departments.

We have worked hard in London with all our partners to reduce the number of ambulance handovers which take longer than 15 minutes. The commitment of staff right across the healthcare system has been clear and in 2017/18 we saw a 30% reduction in patients who wait over one hour and a 15% reduction in the total number of hours lost. This was despite more ambulance activity and a greater number of conveyances to A&E departments.

Patient safety is of course paramount. As a system we have made improvements this year to the cohorting process whereby ambulance clinicians handover the care of their patient to an ED clinician immediately after triage even when bed availability is challenged. We have also piloted at Northwick Park Hospital the National Early Warning Score approach, which monitors the condition of patients whose handover has been delayed or who have been cohorted to the care of the ED. The LAS has been monitoring incidents in real time throughout the winter and to date there have been no recorded cases of actual harm directly related to delayed handover. Nevertheless my view is that delays in handover do not provide patients with the experience that they should receive and there is much more that we need to do.

We are committed to improve further in the coming year, both in reducing handover delays and ensuring that patients do not suffer harm. I am sure the Patients' Forum will be a success and I look forward to hearing the views of the Forum members and feedback from the day.

Yours sincerely,



Jane Cummings
Regional Director,
NHS England (London region)