



London Ambulance Service
NHS Trust



REUSE OF BLANKETS AND AMBULANCE SUSPENSION

Dear Malcolm

I am emailing in respect of two matters that you have raised - separately, although both have been passed to me for my input.

1) Blankets

The guidance to staff remains clear - blankets are not a multi-use item and should not be recycled between patients. Regrettably there remains a sizeable gap between the number of blankets we supply, and the number we collect, each month. Blankets leave the system in several ways - primarily at hospitals or other acute sites, or having been returned to the blanket bins at our stations, we send them for laundering. The collection of blankets from our own sites is a straightforward task and is part of the daily equipment support service. Collection from hospitals is more difficult - apart from anything else, we cannot visit every site, every day. To an extent we rely on our laundry provider for the repatriation of blankets from hospitals (post laundering) although the challenge here is that different hospitals are served by different laundry companies.

In the short term we are doing some work to ensure every major hospital has a secure, well-sited blanket bin solely for LAS use. This will help to ensure ease of collection. We have also agreed terms with one of the other major laundry firms serving London who will now return our blankets that they collect. We recently released some of our winter contingency stock of blankets due to the current period of cold weather. We are also supplying disposable blankets which serve their purpose adequately but are unpopular with staff.

Blankets continue to find their way out of London and to sites that LAS would never conceivably visit - I continue to discuss this and the general matter of proper blanket stewardship with my Operations colleagues to ensure staff understand the importance of it. We are talking to a number of non-London acute Trusts and some other ambulance services (including Private ambulance providers) about our blankets. Longer term my aim is to establish a single London blanket which LAS would share with every London hospital. This is not unachievable but it will require the support of our commissioners, which I am attempting to secure. There are practical challenges to overcome here, not least the issue of competing laundry providers as I mentioned earlier.

2) Ambulance suspension

Just by way of context... the air suspension on our ambulances is an after-market product which is added to the vehicles during the conversion stage (currently by MacNeillie). In other words the standard suspension is removed and a new package added. On earlier Mercedes 416 and 515 vehicles (up to and including the most recent vehicles converted by UVM) this was supplied by a company called Glide-rite. That company went into administration leading us to select a new supplier, VB, for all new Mercedes from 2010 onwards.

Following complaints and a lengthy process of investigation involving the supplier and the converter, it was established that a small number of vehicles had had their air suspension incorrectly calibrated. As a result VB are now in the process of supplying training to all LAS workshops with two workshop sites to date having received the training. I must stress that there is no safety risk since the problems relate to the calibration (i.e. the ride quality) rather than the actual installation. This is an ongoing piece of work and I

have every confidence that once complete, the issue will be wholly addressed. We currently have no plans to change the suspension on our ambulances. You also mentioned equipment and I will come back to you shortly regarding that point. Please let me know if you need any further information on the points I have addressed above.

Best regards

Ed.

Edward Potter

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