

PATIENTS' FORUM

FOR THE LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE

From: Kathy.west1 [<mailto:kathy.west1@ntlworld.com>]

Sent: 18 December 2015 16:54

To: Janice Markey

Equalities and inclusion Steering Group

Dear Janice,

I found yesterday's meeting very interesting - especially as it led off with the training/reflecting video produced by Inclusive Employees together with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services. It was very helpful having Richard McKenna, the Director of Inclusive Employees there to explain how the videos developed - very much involving front line staff, and indeed incorporating some of the best solutions directly from front line ideas. It would be great if something similar could be developed for Ambulance Services, but I know that LAS is so stretched at the present that several staff have told me they haven't even had minimal training the last few years, front line staff only get 24 hours of paid study time, and keeping up with other key issues and changes has to be done in their own time - despite being on extremely demanding and tiring rotas. So I can't see how the excellent type of interactive training which Exclusive Employees has produced will be an option in the near future.

What has been a very positive achievement over the past several years is that LGBT staff rate London Ambulance Service highly as a place to work. But at the same time people from ethnic minorities, women, people with disabilities and others in protected groups have become more and more unhappy as evidenced by staff surveys and staff leaving the service. The CQC results confirm the feedback which we have been picking up for a long time and we are relieved in one sense that we have been raising real issues. Some of the stories we have heard in my view are TOTALLY unacceptable in a modern public service, but many do not have the confidence to raise the issues, feel they would not be supported, and feel there has been no real initiatives to change the culture. (LAS is not the only service facing such issues.) With the current pressure, it gets harder and harder to do the basic job to the high and compassionate standards which are required - much less take on

bullying and negative behaviour from some badly behaved colleagues and managers.

You have made a real difference for LGBT staff but this has not transmitted widely to other groups, and indeed you obviously, as one person, could not possibly put similar support in place for other groups. Some of these may well be more numerous and more diverse than the LBGT group - at least in a numerical sense. Thus really the only way the wider equality and diversity issues can be tackled is through a new, overarching, comprehensive approach - better resourced, interlinked with the rest of LAS, learning from each other, better supported by senior staff (especially HR), better trained, and staff encouraged as to their rights and remedies. A big bonus would be keeping staff longer - one of the benchmarks of a good place to work. Millions of £s must be lost by good, but frustrated and unhappy, staff feeling their only option is to leave when they know the area, the hospitals, the communities, the local GPs, the equipment, the correct interventions, etc. etc. I had a conversation with a couple of former LAS paramedics who left because of severe depression/bullying/lack of support/etc. (each a bit different but both made miserable). They have moved on to more money, one further away, both to jobs they have come to hate - assessing disabled people in an unfair way. So they have both lost good careers working with patients they cared about.. It wouldn't have taken a miracle to keep them at LAS had the support been quicker, better, more equalities and inclusion oriented, etc.

I hope all LAS senior staff will get closer to the coal face and talk to staff working there about how things really are, what they struggle over, what could be improved. . There seem to be some good signs that this is happening. Also, I know you work very hard covering LGBT issues, trying to expand Champions, and looking at other equality issues so this will continue to be helpful but not meet the need. . A new approach is needed as part of a whole system, whole staff approach - in every relevant meeting, planning group, training initiative, review and so on.

I thought the documents you handed out yesterday, for example on "The Recruitment and Retention of Transgender Staff" were excellent but the same support needs to be available as well for other protected staff. In the 1970's I used to be a Training and Education Officer for MIND - and worked for about 4 years with the Department of Health trying to get them to publish information about how to attract, hire and support people who had had mental health problems. It was like trying to wring blood out of a stone, seemed to go on forever, but eventually some

progressive materials were published and some positive new initiatives put in place. Things are easier now as there is a lot more good practice about - Inclusive Employers being an example. LAS is a treasured London service and all Forum Members want to act as critical but supportive friends and value highly our relationships. Like LAS staff we have our eyes on the goals that can be achieved.

Also, I didn't get the name of the LAS man who I believe was the new or acting head of HR so enlightenment would be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kathy West

From: Janice Markey <Janice.Markey@lond-amb.nhs.uk>

Date: 21 December 2015 at 13:26:40 GMT

Equalities and inclusion Steering Group

Dear Kathy

Thank you very much for your email. I absolutely value your input and support and totally would welcome any suggestions you have. I definitely agree that we need to have a comprehensive, integrated approach to equality and inclusion. I would expect the expanded Equality and Inclusion Strategy action plan, containing specific actions for each area of the service, to go a long way to furthering this. Once the BME Forum is up and running effectively, I think that will be a great enabler, as will the other forums we are looking to regenerate through the Joint Staff Forum day.

The next meeting of the steering group is on Thursday February 18 at 1000 in the Conference Room. The name of the Interim Director of HR is Paul Beal.

Thank you very much again Kathy and best wishes for the New Year.

Kind regards

Janice