

PATIENTS' FORUM

FOR THE LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE

111 services provide good advice and urgent care centres provide excellent care, but most people don't know about these services and NHS England has failed to launch its national campaign to inform people about these services. We have been asking them for the past 6 months to launch these services and their 'snail's pace' approach, is one of the important factors in the current unsatisfactory and potentially hazardous situation.

Ambulance staff are under intolerable 100% pressure at the moment. Long shifts, staff shortages, no lunch breaks and relentless pressure to keep people out of A&E. They are at the edge of a precipice, and although staff are being recruited from Australia, this is a short term solution. We urgently need active recruitment of paramedics from our inner cities – we can't rely upon recently graduated Australian paramedics in the long term.

We believe you need to require the NHS to take the following action now if we are to avert a crisis:

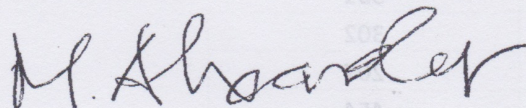
- Immediately launch a 111 advertising campaign
- Expand GP practices and extend working hours
- Stop all A&E closures
- Open more beds to stop ambulance queuing
- Ensure social care funding is meeting the needs of vulnerable patient in order to keep them out of A&E
- Ensure emergency staff can afford to live in the cities where they provide care
- Ensure active fully funded recruitment of paramedics and other front line emergency care staff

Patients often feel they are being blamed for the current situation. In practice delay in getting adequate primary care is leading to patients' health deteriorating and many consequently go to A&E or call an ambulance to secure the medical care they need.

Can you please look at our recommendations? They are all practical and will transform the current situation if acted on quickly

I look forward to receiving your response.

Very best wishes



Malcolm Alexander
Chair
Patients' Forum for London Ambulance Service

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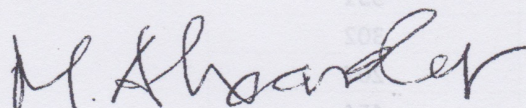
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Department
of Health

From the Rt Hon the Earl Howe P.C.
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Quality (Lords)

POC6 914126

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Chair
Patients' Forum for the London Ambulance Service

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Dear Malcolm,

Thank you for your e-mail correspondence of 21 January about your concerns in respect of securing a safe and effective paramedic workforce.

Firstly, may I say that Jeremy and all his ministerial team including myself fully appreciate the excellent work that our paramedics do up and down the country day in, day out which you have so eloquently described in your letter. We are committed to ensuring paramedics are paid fairly for the very difficult and challenging work they do and that they should be able to enjoy the fulfilling careers they deserve.

Therefore, I am delighted that the strike over pay which unions had been planning between 29 January and 24 February has been averted. The Government and union leaders agreed a revised pay offer for 2015/16 which achieves a balance between an affordable pay increase and enabling the NHS to maintain the staff numbers it needs to deliver services to patients. We are awaiting the outcome of ballots unions are conducting with their members to see if they accept the offer and expect to hear the outcomes from those ballots by the end of the month. Assuming the deal is accepted, this will mean that the majority of NHS staff including paramedics will receive a consolidated 1% pay increase in 2015/16 plus incremental rises for those entitled to them. The pay offer also includes a commitment by ambulance service employers to work in partnership with ambulance unions on career progression as included below, which is taken from a letter containing the pay offer from Jeremy Hunt to Christina McAnea dated 27 January.

“Of course, career progression is an important element of any job. Health Education England (HEE) and the College of Paramedics have established the Paramedic Education and Training Steering Group to look into all aspects of education and training for paramedics, including educational and developmental opportunities. This includes setting up mentoring and preceptorship arrangements in order to assist with establishing clearer pathways for career progression. The Department continues to engage with HEE, the College of Paramedics and others on this work.”

I note your reference to “Jeremy’s comments about potentially imposing restrictions on strike action as tragically unhelpful”. His comments relate to the Conservative party’s manifesto commitments and is dependent on the outcome of the next General Election.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Freddie

EARL HOWE