

STATEMENT FOR THE MAYOR'S HEALTH TEAM

- PATIENTS' FORUM FOR THE LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE

The Patients' Forum for the LAS had an outstanding relationship with the London Ambulance Service (LAS) from 2003 until 2020, which included the opportunity for regular joint public meeting and constructive criticism of the LAS in the public arena, as a means of achieving service improvements for patients.

In 2020 the LAS decided to cut all contacts with the Patients' Forum because the leadership of the LAS felt unable to accept the role of the Forum as a community body monitoring their services from a patients' perspective. The LAS then refused access to their meeting room for our monthly public meetings, blocked 99% of email communications with the LAS and banned us from close monitoring their services. They refused to provide copies of papers for public Board meetings and also closed down without notice the joint education programme between the Forum and the LAS, designed to work with staff to highlight the importance of effective patient and public involvement. This was an HCPC approved project.

All contacts between LAS staff and the Patients' Forum were banned, making it impossible to carry on with numerous streams of quality improvement work. We were also removed from 10 internal LAS committees in which we have represented patients and the public for many years. These actions were justified by the LAS making false statements about the Forum.

Many of our Forum's members had spent considerable amounts of time monitoring LAS services, and up until the end of 2019, this included carrying out ambulance 'ride-outs', visits to the Emergency Operations Centres and the 111 centre in South London, monitoring the Education Centre, and participating in the CQCs monitoring programme of the LAS. We had a major role in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in the LAS, an area in which the LAS had historically performed very badly. The LAS apparently saw our close examination of the effectiveness of the LAS as a threat, and the publication of reports criticising the LAS as untenable.

The hostility of the LAS towards the Forum, included blocking access to LAS performance data. We had received monthly data packs for years, but the LAS and their commissioners refused to provide these, claiming that the data was available from the NHSE website and Board papers, but in practice much of the information in the monthly data packs was not included in the Board papers or the NHSE website. The monthly performance packs continued to be provided to CCGs through the period when data was denied to the Forum and to Healthwatch.

The following data was requested by Hackney Healthwatch (of which I am Chair), but despite the statutory duty on the LAS and commissioners to provide this data to

Healthwatch, between October – February 2022 they both refused to provide this data:

- 1) Performance by each London CCG are to enable us to compare mean C1, C2, C3 or C4 breaches by CCG/borough across London. These refer to ambulance arrival time for emergencies, e.g. (C1 - cardiac arrest, C2 e.g. stroke or heart attack).
- 2) The hospital conveyance lost hours report published by the LAS is missing the following data:
 - Handovers to ED exceeding 15 minutes - **contractual breaches**
 - Arrival to handover: % over 15 minutes and the overrun per 15-minute breach
 - Total time lost over 15 minutes (in hours)
 - **Handovers to ED exceeding 60 mins**

The commissioners claimed that they had been instructed by the LAS not to provide the data to Healthwatch and the LAS required Healthwatch Hackney to request the data through the FOI, which Healthwatch had never before been required to use to access data. The missing data we had requested included reports on the contractual duty to hand over patients from ambulances to A&E within 15 minutes and data on patients handed over to A&E in excess of one hour. We concluded that the data was being withheld because performance was so poor – eventually the data which Healthwatch had requested was provided on March 25th 2022 through the FOI.

The Patients Forum and Healthwatch Hackney have recently met with Daniel Elkeles the CE of the LAS and raised many of these issues with him.

Healthwatch should not need to use the FOI to collect data, because the legislation allows Healthwatch reasonable access to all data under s224 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007 (amended by section 186 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012). “Duties of responsible persons to respond to Local Healthwatch organisations or contractors”, requires all NHS bodies including the LAS to provide data requested to Healthwatch.

We believe the LAS and North West London Commissioners are in breach of the NHS Constitution which states:

- 1) The NHS is accountable to the public, communities and patients that it serves.
- 2) The system of responsibility and accountability for taking decisions in the NHS should be transparent and clear to the public, patients and staff.
- 3) The NHS values provide common ground for co-operation to achieve shared aspirations, at all levels of the NHS.
- 4) Patients come first in everything we do. We fully involve patients, staff, families, carers, communities, and professionals inside and outside the NHS.
- 5) We put the needs of patients and communities before organisational boundaries.

As an example of good practice, the Homerton Hospital provides Healthwatch with data every day on their A&E performance and compliance with targets.

We have recently raised the matters above with the London Assembly Health Committee and will raise it with the ICP/CCG Chairs if in the future performance data is concealed from public view.

Malcolm Alexander
Chair
Patients' Forum for the LAS
07817505193
Patientsforumlas@aol.com
www.patientsforumlas.net