

PATIENTS' FORUM

FOR THE LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE

Sandra Adams
Chair of the Equality and Inclusion Committee
London Ambulance Service
220 Waterloo Road
SE1

February 17th 2016

Dear Sandra,

As you know, for some time, we have been concerned about the LAS's achievements towards achieving adequate and reasonable progress in relation to the objectives of the Equalities Act and its Public Sector Equality Duty. This requires the LAS to take continuous steps towards adequately meeting the needs of patients and staff with all of the protected characteristics described in the Act.

As the CQC highlighted this matter, we feel it is essential that the opportunity is taken to achieve significant improvements in the short term; unfortunately, the agenda for the Equality and Inclusion meeting to be held on Thursday February 18th 2016, does not seem to reflect the steer suggested by the CQC report.

Given the very positive changes which are being put in place in other parts of the organisation as the result of the CQC assessment, we believe this is an excellent time to re-evaluate the impact of equality and inclusion over the whole of LAS. Currently, the lack of focus on diversity and inclusion prevents the skills, abilities, culture, ethnicity, sex, disabilities of all staff being adequately valued.

We believe that the E&I Committee urgently needs a holistic plan if it is to move forward. The excellent work with Stonewall needs to be integrated and replicated with every protected characteristic. The strategy needs to clearly lay out what is to be achieved and by when, but with the current strategy the LAS would not achieve compliance with its public sector equality duty for many years. We would also strongly recommend getting the support of Inclusive Employers, given that LAS has recently joined this excellent organisation.

With regard to the Equality Forums, the E&I Forward Plan does not seem to set out exactly what the Forums plan to do, how they are monitored, what their

aspirations and achievements are, how patients will benefit and what the targets and milestones are. We would like to suggest that the Forums need implementation plans and milestones, so that we can regularly monitor progress, and a quarterly reporting back mechanism on achievements.

We would like to Terms of Reference to be updated and serious consideration given to accountability of staff for decisions made by the E&I Committee. We would also appreciate having access to the policies mentioned in the press release by Stonewall and to have assurances that the Terms of Reference of the Equality and Inclusion Committee reflects what is in these policies.

Assurances are needed that accurate staff records are kept for example in relation to ethnicity, disabilities/related health issues and other protected characteristics. If these characteristics are not accurately recorded the E&I Committee can't measure progress or ensure that appropriate resources have been allocated, policies updated and changes made.

We would like to request that each of the LAS Champions who have agreed to provide leadership in relation to protected characteristics, report back regularly and demonstrate progress in the areas where they have agreed to provide leadership for the LAS and its patients.

The Equality and Inclusion Committee does not currently have the resources to ensure that these issues are taken up adequately across the organisation, and in our view it is necessary for all LAS committees to ensure that these issues form part of the substance of their work programmes. This would be of enormous benefit to both patients and staff.

There is clearly a long way to go to get to grips with the duties which are laid on the LAS to achieve real progress in relation to each of the protected characteristics, but we hope that these suggestions will help and we will continue to monitor progress through our representation on the committee.

Very best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Alexander', written in a cursive style.

Malcolm Alexander
Chair
Patients' Forum for the LAS

Copy to Kathy West, Janice Markey, Paul Beal, HR Director,
Tony Crabtree, Assistant HR Director, Zoe Packman Director for Quality and Nursing