

## THE LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST

## Consultation on the Trust's Quality Account - 2014/2015

**Response on behalf of the External Services Scrutiny Committee at the London Borough of Hillingdon**

The External Services Scrutiny Committee welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Trust's 2014/2015 Quality Account report and acknowledges the Trust's commitment to attend its meetings when requested. The Committee recognises that, over the last year, the Trust has experienced pressures which have resulted in a lower attendance at its meetings. As such, it is encouraging to see that the Trust has already recruited and trained over 260 new members of frontline staff and has plans in place to increase this number to 850 by the end of 2015/2016. However, the Trust needs to ensure that the retention measures that it has planned are sufficient enough to entice staff to stay.

The Committee has no doubt that the service provided by the Trust is excellent and that it should be congratulated on receiving the MPDS Centre of Excellence award and the Cabinet Offices' Customer Services Excellence Accreditation. However, concern has been expressed that the Trust is under growing pressure, primarily resulting from an increasing demand, and that this puts additional pressure on existing staff and therefore impacts on staff turnover. It is recognised that action is already being undertaken to increase capacity and decrease demand and the Committee looks forward to receiving an update on the effectiveness of these initiatives and the value for money that they have provided.

The report notes that there had been "low levels of staff satisfaction evidenced in our disappointing staff survey results" and mention is made of the action taken to strengthen staff engagement and communication. However, information in relation to the most common issues raised by staff and the monitoring procedures that have been put in place to address any areas of concern have not been mentioned.

The Trust's Quality Account report provides a range of information about the service that it provides across the whole of London but there are areas which would benefit from the inclusion of more detail. Although it is understood that the format and content of the Quality Report is largely predetermined, consideration could be given to using less technical language to make the report more accessible to lay people. In terms of the information provided within the report, it would be useful to include the % targets that had been set for the period (e.g., Category A calls). In addition, Members believe that the report could be strengthened by the use of better time serialised data going back five years to identify trends and show a course of direction.

Over the last year, the volume of complaints has risen by 24%. Although the Committee has no reason to think that the Trust is not dealing with these complaints effectively, Members would like further assurances about the timeliness of the action taken by LAS to address the source of the complaints and the procedures put in place to ensure that lessons are learnt throughout the organisation from these complaints.

Historically, the Trust has sent a single responder as well as an ambulance crew to many calls in a bid to achieve its response time targets. It is recognised that the LAS has made changes to improve the efficiency of the service and, to this end, has reduced the multiple attendance ratio (MAR) from 1.41 to 1.30. The Committee looks forward to receiving an update on the impact that these measures have had on capacity and waiting times and any associated impact on the achievement of response time targets.

It is encouraging to note that mental health continues to be an area of focus for the LAS over the next year with the pan-London use of the mental health risk assessment tool, a new action plan, focus groups and a range of training being provided for staff (including those in the Emergency Operations Centre). Given that there have been issues in relation to LAS attendance regarding section 136 incidents involving the police (highlighted in the Committee's recent review of Policing and Mental Health), the Committee looks forward to receiving an update on the dedicated desk that had been set up to manage calls and provide appropriate triage to patients and support to police colleagues.

Overall, the Committee welcomes the initiatives that the Trust is putting in place to address areas in need of improvement and is pleased with the excellent service that it continues to provide in the face of rapidly growing demand and limited resources. However, there are a number of areas where further improvements still need to be made and we look forward to receiving updates on progress and the work undertaken to support the priorities outlined in the report over the course of 2015/16.