

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Mayor's Office

Victoria Borwick AM

City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London SE1 2AA

City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London SE1 2AA
Switchboard: 020 7983 4000
Minicom: 020 7983 4458
Web: www.london.gov.uk
Our ref: MGLA211211-7631

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Dear Victoria

The future of the London Ambulance Service

Thank you for sending me a copy of the Health and Public Services Committee's most interesting and thorough report into the London Ambulance Service. I have considered your recommendations carefully and responded below. Please note that my response to your first recommendation is also made on behalf of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime.

Recommendation 1

'The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime should commission a review of the processes used by the London Ambulance Service and the Metropolitan Police Service, for making and handling police requests for ambulance support. The review should aim to recommend steps that would help reduce the number of incidents attended by the LAS as a result of police requests, without having a detrimental effect on patient outcomes. The British Transport Police and City of London Police should also be invited to participate in the review; other partner organisations such as the London Fire Brigade should also be consulted. Recommendations should focus on shared resources or improvements to working practices. The review should begin its work as soon as possible in the new Mayoral term, commencing in May 2012, and aim to complete its work within three months.'

As you rightly point out, delivering high quality care in the context of value for money is critical. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPC) faces similar challenges in delivering the highest quality policing service to Londoners in a more effective and efficient manner. The report's first recommendation presents a welcome opportunity to review the way in which the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and its partners can more effectively use LAS. Susan Doran, Manager of the Operational Policing and Crime Reduction team, will be leading this for the MOPC. I am pleased to note that the number of police calls attended by LAS has reduced over the past 18 months and look forward to seeing this trend continue.

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To support this my Deputy Mayor for Policing, Kit Malthouse, has suggested that the terms of reference for this piece of work be established at the next quarterly Emergency Services meeting for approval and that the completed review be presented at a later date for discussion and sign off.

Recommendation 2

'As Chair of Transport for London, the Mayor should invite the London Ambulance Service to participate in the project board developing proposals for the integration of door-to-door services. Thereafter, the project board should develop a comprehensive plan to establish an integrated door-to-door service that supports people with mobility problems to get around the city and access health services. The Mayor should confirm the invitation to the LAS in his response to the Committee by the end of February 2012.'

The project board developing proposals for the integration of door-to-door services is led by London Councils so it is not within my gift to invite the London Ambulance Service to participate. However, I will ensure that your suggestion is passed on to John O'Brien at London Councils and I understand that this is likely to be positively received.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should invite the London Ambulance Service to join the London Health Improvement Board, in order to explore opportunities for joint working on public education and the prevention of ill health. The Mayor should confirm the invitation to the LAS in his response to the Committee by the end of February 2012.

You rightly point out in your report that alcohol misuse, especially amongst young people, places a strain on London's emergency services. Therefore, I believe that the most effective way to engage the London Ambulance Service in the work of the London Health Improvement Board is via LHIB's alcohol workstream and I understand that the alcohol project director has already contacted the LAS to arrange this.

Recommendation 4

The Mayor should commission a review of shared facilities and joint working between the London Ambulance Service and the London Fire Brigade. The review should aim to generate efficiencies by making specific proposals for shared stations and control centres. The review should begin its work as soon as possible in the new Mayoral term, commencing in May 2012.

I know that both LAS and LFEPA as public sector bodies will want to make the most of opportunities to share such resources where possible in the interests of efficiency and for the benefit of Londoners. Indeed, some progress has already been made in exploring this. I understand that both LFEPA and the LAS are willing to review this further and I suggest that LFEPA raises this at the next quarterly Emergency Services meeting.

Recommendation 5

The London Ambulance Service should set out in its next Annual Report plans to deliver efficiencies through coordinated working with other public services. This should cover such areas as shared finance and clinical audit functions with other ambulance services, and shared procurement opportunities (such as fuel, facilities management and back-office functions) with other emergency services in London.

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I have no doubt that all public sector bodies will wish to explore ways to work more efficiently through co-ordination with one another. For example Transport for London is already engaged in discussions with the London Ambulance Service about shared services in a number of areas, including ongoing work to produce a combined contract for the procurement of fuel by a number of public bodies in London. As a publically accountable body I have no doubt that LAS will want to consider how it puts these and other efficiency plans in the public domain.

Recommendation 6

The London Ambulance Service should consider specifying the Greater London Authority, Transport for London, Metropolitan Police Service and London Fire Brigade as partnership organisations in the constitution it adopts upon becoming a Foundation Trust, and appoint a representative of each organisation to the LAS Council of Governors. We ask the LAS to report back to the Committee on how it will take forward this recommendation. Following this, when the LAS becomes a Foundation Trust the Mayor should ask the GLA representative on the LAS Council of Governors (which could mean an Assembly Member) to apply to the Council to be appointed a non-executive director of the LAS, in order to begin the detailed work to bring the organisations more closely together.

I understand that TfL has expressed a willingness to consider accepting a place on the LAS Board of Governors (should such an invitation be forthcoming), and LFEPA would welcome such an approach. For my part I would welcome strategic engagement between the GLA and the LAS on specific topics as they arise (rather than a GLA place on the LAS Board of Governors or as a non-executive director) and I look forward to discussing options for more strategic engagement between the GLA and the London Ambulance Service over the coming months.

Yours ever,



Boris Johnson
Mayor of London

Cc: Brian Coleman AM, Chair, LFEPA
Kit Malthouse AM, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime
Peter Hendy, Commissioner, Transport for London
Pamela Chesters, Mayoral Advisor on Health and Families
Susannah Drury, Scrutiny Manager, London Assembly