

LONDON ASSEMBLY

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Krupesh Hirani AM
Chair of the Health Committee

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
(Sent by email)

Dear Sadiq,

6 April 2023

London Ambulance Service

I am writing to you in my position as Chair of the London Assembly Health Committee regarding the London Ambulance Service (LAS). This follows a visit by the Committee to the London Ambulance Service Dockside Education Centre and Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Newham on 24 January 2023. The Committee had the opportunity to question LAS representatives on the new LAS strategy for 2023-2028, and discuss wider issues facing healthcare provision in London.¹

Through our discussion with LAS representatives and a call to patient groups and members of the public for written evidence, the Health Committee set out to understand how LAS is performing, where it is delivering successfully and where improvements could be made. We looked at the emerging themes of the new LAS strategy, and explored whether these are the right priorities for LAS.

The Committee also asked what action the Mayor and other stakeholders can take to support LAS and improve performance for Londoners. This discussion resulted in a set of

¹ The LAS panel for the strategy session was attended by: Andy Trotter, Chair; Daniel Elkeles, Chief Executive; Dr John Martin, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Paramedic and Quality Officer; Dr Fenella Wrigley, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Medical Officer; Cathy-Anne Burchett, Assistant Director of Operations South East London; and Roger Davidson, Director of Strategy and Transformation

recommendations on how the Mayor can support LAS, which are set out below. The Committee has written to LAS directly with a series of recommendations, and will also be writing to NHS London and the Department for Transport to highlight recommendations specific to them.

London-wide healthcare governance

The NHS in London has undergone significant change since the development of the five integrated care systems (ICSs): North West London, North Central London, North East London, South East London, and South West London. The King's Fund has stated that "ICSs...are part of a fundamental shift in the way the health and care system is organised."² Andy Trotter, LAS Chair commented on the "complexity" that exists for LAS in managing these multiple relationships as a pan-London healthcare provider.

The Committee heard from LAS representatives including Daniel Elkeles, Chief Executive of LAS, that their desire is for the LAS to be given London-wide governance for the organisation. Andy Trotter, LAS Chair, told the Committee that this "would give a degree of coherence" and would save senior leaders more time to focus on "London-wide strategic matters". The Mayor, as chair of the London Health Board, is well placed to initiate the debate around how best to structure the governance of healthcare provision in London. The Committee has also made a recommendation to NHS London with regards to providing the healthcare system in London with additional resources and support to embed the relationships between LAS and the five integrated care systems.

Recommendation 1: The Mayor should work with LAS, NHS London and the five Integrated care systems (ICSs) to explore options for a more simplified London-wide governance structure for LAS.

LAS Sustainability Funding

LAS has identified climate change as "one of the most significant public health emergencies" and has committed to working towards targets for all NHS organisations to be net zero for directly controlled emissions by 2040, and net zero for wider emissions that they influence by 2045.³ The Committee welcomes this focus. A response to our call for evidence from NHS South East London Integrated Care Board (ICB) said that it was "essential" that the new strategy linked in with the LAS Estates Strategy and its sustainability plans, arguing that these plans "cannot work in isolation".⁴ The Committee heard that LAS has made good progress towards making its fleet more sustainable, but there remains the significant challenge of 'greening' the service's estate.⁵ According to LAS' Carbon Neutral Plan, making the existing estate more energy efficient and replacing gas boilers with renewable sources of heating by 2032 are required for LAS to achieve its net zero targets.

LAS told the Committee that financing is the biggest obstacle to the organisation achieving this. The LAS Carbon Neutral Plan sets out how this "scale of transformation will require multi-year financial commitment to prioritise sustainability improvements across the next decade" and that external funding will be required as "internally generated capital funding will not be

² The King's Fund, [Integrated care systems in London](#)

³ LAS Carbon Neutral Plan April 2022 – March 2025 – [London Ambulance Service Carbon Neutral Plan April 2022 – March 2025 - London Ambulance Service NHS Trust](#)

⁴ NHS South East London ICB, Call for Evidence: London Ambulance Service strategy 2023-28, Submitted to London Assembly Health Committee, 11/1/23

⁵ Health Committee Meeting Transcript – London Ambulance Service Strategy 2023-2028, 24 January 2023

sufficient”⁶. At the meeting, LAS representatives noted that the Mayor of London could potentially offer support in securing this funding, particularly through the GLA’s Green Bond Programme that was announced in February 2022. The scheme has already identified electric vehicle charging infrastructure, the development of district energy networks, and social housing retrofitting as investment priorities.⁷ It would be worth exploring whether this programme could also include retrofitting the estates of organisations such as LAS.

Recommendation 2: The Mayor should explore opening up the GLA Green Bond Programme to organisations such as LAS to allow for retrofitting of their estate.

999 Public Education Campaigns

Londoners have a key role to play in supporting LAS to manage demand on ambulance services. This was evident during the most recent period of industrial action, when Londoners were urged to only use 999 for the most serious cases. During its meeting with LAS, the Committee heard that this was successful in reducing the number of 999 calls during the strike period. Healthwatch Kingston, as part of its community engagement work, found that there was an issue with the “public’s lack of understanding about when to use the service and when to use alternatives”, in particular whether someone should call 999, call 111, or contact their GP.⁸ The Healthwatch Kingston consultation also found that “people wanted more education for the community on how to support themselves before emergency intervention is required.”⁹ LAS representatives at the meeting explained that public knowledge of how to make 999 calls and what to expect when making the call is highly valued by LAS staff.

LAS representatives told the Committee that they do take action in this area, highlighting a recent campaign advising people celebrating New Years’ Eve to drink sensibly and behave appropriately to ease demand on ambulance crews. The Mayor has the power to support and amplify these campaigns to have greater reach and educate more Londoners.

Recommendation 3: The Mayor should work with LAS on public awareness campaigns to educate Londoners on correct usage of the 999 emergency service.

The Committee would welcome a response to this letter by 19 May 2023. Please send your response by email to the Committee’s Clerk, Diane Richards (diane.richards@london.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely,

⁶ LAS Carbon Neutral Plan April 2022 – March 2025 - [London Ambulance Service Carbon Neutral Plan April 2022 – March 2025 - London Ambulance Service NHS Trust](#)

⁷ Mayor of London, [Mayor announces £90 million towards new green bonds](#)

⁸ Healthwatch Kingston, Community Engagement – London Ambulance Service Strategy 2023–2028, Submission to the London Assembly Health Committee, 13/1/23. Local Healthwatch groups are independent organisations whose purpose is to make recommendations to healthcare providers on behalf of patients

⁹ Healthwatch Kingston, Community Engagement – London Ambulance Service Strategy 2023–2028, Submission to the London Assembly Health Committee, 13/1/23.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Krupesh Hirani', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Krupesh Hirani AM
Chair of the Health Committee