

London Ambulance Service NHS Trust
A&E Sub Committee
21st December 2006, 13.00 – 16.00
Conference Room

Chair: Russell Smith Deputy Director Operations HQ

Present: Julie Cook HR Manager HQ
Shani Phipps Resource Manager Bromley
Gary Edwards Sector Rep West Isleworth
Mark Lione Sector Rep East Central Homerton
Eddie Brand Staff Side Chair Romford
Peter Hannell Sector Rep North West Kenton
Barry Bowyer Sector Rep Central Rotherhithe

In Attendance: Paul Gibson AOM St John's Wood
Fay Thompson (minutes) PA to Deputy Director Ops HQ

Action

59/06 Apologies
Steve Sale
Micky Butler
Dave Lamey – Running late

60/06 Previous Minutes
All agreed

61/06 Matters Arising
61.01 EMT – IT/PH
Not Discussed

61.02 Standby working group - RS

RS advised that the group had not met recently due to Rest Break meetings. EB advised that Richard Lee, AOM at Wimbledon, had arranged for a standby point at a hotel in Wandsworth and had booked a room for staff.

61.03 Black boxes - RS

RS advised that these are Incident Data Recording boxes and are being trialled in the West Area for 4-5 months. They enable us to have an understanding of what happened 30 seconds before and after an accident, to be in a position to defend the Trust. This issue has already been considered by the Alternative Response Working Group, Vehicle Equipment working group and the Motor Risk Management Group.

61.04 Alternative rest days

RS and EB have not managed to meet on this subject. RS to clarify by letter to EB whether alternative rest days should be in addition to annual leave allowance.

RS/EB
RS

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61.05 Cleaning impounded vehicles

RS has spoken to CV who advised that LRS will take on the task – either to have someone on call once vehicle is returned to us or factor it into their day-to-day cleaning.

EB expressed concerns that Police may be detaining vehicles for a longer period than is necessary. RS raised this issue with ACC Tarique Ghaffur, who investigated two cases and responded that they were only kept for the necessary time.

61.06 Single Staffing Policy

Deferred to next meeting – SS

Additional Matter Arising

It was noted that the service is trying to improve governance by ensuring that issues discussed at A&E sub-committee have been through local committees first. An East Area committee referral has requested clarification of when an individual on a voluntary secondment has to surrender his/her rota line. Is this after 12 months and is this a Service-wide issue?

Usual protocol is for a secondment to be undertaken for 6 months - so the core line would be kept. ECPs set a wider precedent with 12 month decision period. Pan-London agreement required. The group discussed reasoning around the 12 month secondment period, and felt it was reasonable to make a decision at this point. It was agreed that a rule needs to be put in place, but that this should exclude car secondments.

Refer FRUs to the Alternative Response Steering Group.

RS

It was requested that A&E Sub committee minutes be sent out to all station administrators at next distribution and thereafter.

FT/SV

62/06 High Impact Changes – Update
Reducing Red call volume

RS reported steady progress on this initiative. 0.5% of red calls have been reclassified to Ambers. Another 2.5% to be reclassified by end Feb. ECPAG (Emergency Call Prioritisation Advisory Group) are addressing the national over-prioritisation issue.

Increase number of dispatch desks in EOC

RS reported slower progress on this initiative due to skill-mix issues in EOC. West Desk has now been split, however when the desks are understaffed they are put back together, so it has been difficult to measure the success.

Next step is to enable the East desk to be split – staff recruitment to EOC is underway to allow permanent splitting of all desks.

Automatic dispatch of cars – FRED(Fast Response Electronic Dispatch)

RS reported that this initiative began w/c 11th December 2006 and is performing well. The software has been written to ignore cars on station, as the driver may be out of the car. IM&T are looking at this to see how it can be changed. RS advised that Cat A8

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can be improved by sending more cars to more calls.

Drivers have been expressing concern that they are travelling greater distances since the introduction of FRED and workload is low. E.g. today, max 4 calls on each car Pan-London. RS explained that in the new year we may include AMBER1 calls as well as RED, to keep cars local and utilise them better.

PH notes that more staff are required at RTAs where currently only one vehicle is being assigned. LAS arrive sooner than Met Pol.

Group discussed issues of crews having to request extra vehicle.

West Area is still a concern as it is well staffed but ambulances are being sent instead of cars, due to the rules around FRED. These are being reviewed.

Home Responding

Home responding has begun in two areas (Biggin Hill and Coulsdon), but there is no report available yet. EB expressed concern that the pay issue was not brought to AfC terms and conditions group. RS said he would ask for it to be raised there.

RS

Reducing Job Cycle Time

RS reported that all hospital CEOs have been written to, explaining the project. Locally managers have been working with Casualty Dept managers to look at the processes in place to try to speed them up.

EB expressed concern that the name of the project may encourage staff to spend less time with patients, or drive too fast. He asked that consideration be given to change it to "Hospital Turnaround Project".

RS

Reducing performance fall at changeover time.

RS reported that this issue has been made worse by rest breaks with the introduction of early finishes. So far the project has achieved staggered start times for cars and is now focussing on ambulances. RS requested the support of reps to achieve this important project and reminded the committee of the serious clinical risk between 06-07 and 18-19, when serious delays can occur.

RS invited feedback on staggered start/finish times. EB advised that there would be strong resistance and that it was unlikely to be achieved at Romford– given AfC issues with unsocial hours. SP: Beckenham have requested to change. PH: advised that a vote has been invited. BB: Westminster has requested change but nothing has been put into place. GE: Smithfield also requested change: RS to investigate outside of this group. GE: Isleworth, Hanwell and Hillingdon already staggered.

RS

Individual Performance Monitoring

(Waterloo, City & Hackney & Hanwell trials.)

RS reported that the project is in the pilot phase and lessons are being learned for the Service-wide roll out. GE noted that initial reservations have been quashed. Further reports will be made available at the end of the trial.

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63/06 Rest Breaks - Feedback

PH stated that the agreement has been going quite well. Whether staff are getting a break without an interruption or if they're getting £10, they're happy. GE noted that there was some initial confusion in the first week, which has now been cleared up and it's not been a problem since. Other reps agreed with this analysis but accepted that there was a small percentage of staff who were not pleased with the new arrangements.

EB agreed that most people must be quite happy as he has not heard from the majority.

RS gave background on the current situation. EOC staff issues resulted from stress partly brought about by some inappropriate comments from crews. RS encouraged the group to distribute the message that this was not acceptable from any LAS employee.

GE noted that the new system has created a lot of extra work for admin staff. RS recognised this and said he would be leading a group make the administration easier. New break sheets have been trialled in EC Sector today, the results of which will be reported. Control Office have been found that the 'queries' hotline volume is too high to manage, with approximately 40 queries coming in each day.

RS then outlined issues of mis-matched crews with staff on a 12 hour shifts being crewed with those on an 8 hour shift. PH suggested that the break be taken in the 8 hour window with the 8 hour shift having a 45 minute break. It was also proposed that the break times of the vehicle should be used.

Rest Break group to re-convene to discuss these issues.

EB stated that some crews are getting enforced overtime – issues highlighted.

RS noted that EOC have been instructed to ensure that crews get a rest break, which is causing some problems due to an increase in CAT A calls, the knock-on effect of which has been a dip in performance.

RS noted that a small number of people are trying to avoid rest breaks by taking long routes back to station, experiencing VOR, sitting outside station etc. EOC staff can view this on screen and via the traffic cameras. RS advised the committee that management would take action in these circumstances as this behaviour was not in the spirit of the agreement.

64/06 Funding Position & Overtime

The service is in danger of not ending the year in budget this year. Overtime has been reduced, but there are concerns that we will still not be on target. The CAO has asked each directorate to find savings for last 3 months of the year, to assist with overtime in A&E. Purchasing has been restricted until the next financial year.

RS stated that he would like to hold the current overtime levels, but as the Service is fully staffed this would be difficult.

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BB noted that there are still a lot of vehicles unstaffed. RS advised that this is due to 7% sickness and long term secondments like the HART project (23 staff) and CAD 2010 project.

RS advised the committee that the Chief Executive is confident that we will be on budget and at 75% cat A performance, as contracted.

65/06 Resource Centre Locations

To be deferred to 2007

66/06 Police Use of LAS

It was suggested in previous minutes that John Hopson was requested to speak to Met Pol counterparts.

67/06 Dangerous Address Risk Register

To be removed from agenda.

68/06 Lone Responder Duties

Not discussed.

69/06 EMT2 and EMT1 Crewed Together

Dealt with above.

70/06 Willesden & Park Royal Station Merger

PH thanked Paul Gibson for attending and tabled a number of concerns and issues with the Falcon Industrial Park Site. In particular the environmental concerns, traffic congestion and egress from the site were areas of concern.

Paul Gibson gave a presentation outlining the challenges and the proposed site.

PH suggested that had consultation with the area rep been sought, some of the issues that we now face may not have occurred. He said they would be seeking legal advice in relation to the lack of consultation.

PG noted that reps had been aware of the site for 2 years, but PH stated that he had not been made aware until the lease had been signed.

RS noted that he felt that the issue would not be solved at the meeting given the strength of feeling in the West area.

EB noted that we should be drawing from past experiences, where we have relocated stations to industrial estates.

PH stated that a meeting needs to be set up in January 07 in order to discuss this and

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gain views from staff. RS suggested that it may be a good idea to ask Peter Bradley to visit the two stations and talk to staff about the situation.

Russell Smith apologised on behalf of the Service if there had been a lack of consultation.

PG agreed to speak to Martin Nelhams in order to obtain air quality reports and arrange a meeting.

PG

71/06 Cycle Response Unit & Calls
Deferred

72/06 Irregular Attendance Procedures – GE

GE raised an issue from the West Area Meeting. Delays have been encountered with people being put on the IAP up to 3 months after it has been triggered. He proposed that the IAP should be backdated to the date it was triggered.

The group discussed issues around an IAP being activated late and people who may perhaps have made more of an effort to attend work when slightly unwell.

JC noted that an IAP should be issued within 7 days of return to work unless there are extenuating circumstances.

GE stated that delays are a regular occurrence. The group discussed the issue of extended IAPs, due to the late start of informal IAP sanctions. PG felt that a week was insufficient time to see people for a return to work interview and an informal warning meeting.

EB agreed to take the issue to the Managing Attendance forum

EB

73/06 Core line ‘ghostings’ at Friern Barnet

PH advised the group that ‘ghostings’ are being withdrawn at Friern Barnet station. He expressed concern that the AOM should take this decision and asked whether it could be stopped, as the staff are feeling that they are being disadvantaged. The AOM had stated that it was a tool to improve cover and therefore performance.

At the Area meeting Peter Horne noted that he would not overrule the AOM.

SP stated that Barnehurst station AOM has taken similar action.

RS outlined the benefits of ‘acting up’ staff to cover core lines, against the benefits of keeping staff on the more flexible relief rota. He accepted that different managers have different views on this issue.

RS felt it would be wrong to over-rule either Peter Horne or the AOM, as they are responsible for the performance in their area and must be allowed to make local decisions.

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74/06 Diabetic Update

All internal grievance about this situation have now been received. RS stated that this matter is still under consideration and a final decision will be made shortly.

ECPs & FRU Driving

PH updated the group regarding an ECP at Pinner complex who has been in post for 9 months in the LAS but fitted the ECP criteria due to previous nursing experience. All ECPs are being tasked as FRUs drivers. This particular ECP has not had their 3rd ride-out, so is not ready for the Miller's. Staff side requested that the ECP in question be taken off the FRU until he has completed relevant training.

Risk assessment has been carried out by Adam Crosby. PH has requested a copy of the Risk assessment. Concerns were voiced over whether Mr Crosby has the necessary training to carry this out. There was concern expressed as to whether this person had sufficient LAS experience to respond on an FRU.

RS to speak to Adam Crosby to gain background.

RS

76/06 Estates Issues

PH noted that some stations are in a state of disrepair - St. John's Wood (kitchen), Kenton and other stations around NW/W – mostly mess-rooms. Wembley Station is currently being housed in a porta-cabin, awaiting a station rebuild. PH stated that these issues were causing morale to drop and restrictions on spending have included even small items.

RS pointed out that small items can be purchased on an AOM purchasing card, if necessary. PG stated that the kitchen at St. John's Wood will be refurbished in April/May 07. RS observed that other station upgrades would also probably need to wait until after April, as departments have been asked to make savings to support A&E overtime.

77/06 Any other Business

None

78/06 Date of Next Meeting

15th February 2007, 14.00 – 16.00