



# The London Ambulance Service Bullying and Harassment Review: Summary & Action Plan

1<sup>st</sup> July 2015

## 1. Executive Summary

The results of the 2013 NHS staff survey highlighted a problem with bullying and harassment in the London Ambulance Service (LAS). In response to this, we commissioned an external expert organisation to carry out a review which concluded that there is evidence of bullying and harassment within LAS.

The review made a number of recommendations which we have fully accepted and a comprehensive action plan has been developed which is included later in this document. As well as progressing the action plan as an organisational priority, the Chief Executive, Trust Board and leadership team have made it clear that the LAS will take a firm approach on bullying and harassment.

We have committed to being open and transparent about the bullying and harassment report and communicating it and the actions that are being taken to staff, stakeholders and the media.

## 2. Background

In the 2013 NHS staff survey we experienced a slight increase in the level of responses from staff regarding the incidence of bullying and harassment at work. The NHS staff survey seeks views on a wide variety of topics of which bullying and harassment is just a small part. As a responsible organisation we needed to act on the feedback of our employees. In the Autumn of 2014, as part of the staff survey Action Plan we commissioned the Andrea Adams Consultancy, who specialise in research into bullying and harassment, to conduct an independent review to determine the scale of the problem, and put a plan of action in place to improve things.

## 3. Approach

In carrying out the review, the Andrea Adams Consultancy sought to involve as many employees as possible to try and get beneath the figures that the NHS survey revealed. The review engaged with staff through:

- An online survey, open to all staff for six weeks.
- Focus groups in various locations
- A further questionnaire for focus group attendees
- One to one phone interviews with the consultant.

Up to 327 employees participated in the review. As the review was carried out under strict assurances of confidentiality it is not possible to determine the total number of staff who participated as some may have engaged in more than one method.

## 4. Key findings

Of the 327 responses received, 68% (220) said that they had experienced bullying or harassment in the workplace. It is worth noting that the 327 responses represent between up to 6% of our total staff.

Of the 220 that said that had experienced bullying or harassment, 192 provided examples of what type of behaviour they had experienced:

- 66% said that they had experienced verbal abuse (called names, threatened, made to feel bad).
- 43% said they had experienced social bullying (being left out, isolated or ignored).
- 18% said that they had experienced Cyber Bullying (Misuse of the internet, social media, email or texts).
- 6% said that they had experienced sexual harassment (unwanted sexual advances, harassment and innuendo).
- 5% said that they had experienced physical bullying (being punched, pushed or other physical aggressive contact).
- 32% said that the bullying took other forms.

Of those who participated some reported experiencing more than one form of bullying or harassment.

The main findings of the report are as follows:

- There is evidence of bullying taking place in the LAS
- The current organisational response to bullying and harassment is poor
- The prevailing culture is one which tolerates bullying and harassment
- Evidence suggests that bullying and harassment is prevalent across the whole organisation including EMT and SMT. Whilst the online survey reported bullying incidents at other levels of management and between colleagues, feedback in the Focus Groups was exclusively related to EMT and SMT
- There is a blame culture and one which is overly focused on time targets rather than patient care and employee well-being
- Management capability in terms of people management is poor
- Allegations of bullying and harassment have not been effectively investigated or dealt with
- The preferred and endorsed management style is 'command and control'
- Systems and processes are rigidly enforced with no room for discretion based on individual circumstances
- Resourcing failures have put excessive pressure on the remaining resources, which contributes to people's sense of being bullied
- Good people managers are not valued in the same way as those who get results. Positive people management is not seen as the way to get results
- Bullies are perceived to have been rewarded with promotion
- Until now EMT/SMT have not addressed the issue of bullying and harassment and have ignored the organisational memory.

## **5. Report recommendations and LAS actions**

### **5.1 Report Recommendations and LAS Actions**

In response to the recommendations we have identified the following actions as detailed below. A timeline for implementation is shown in figure 1 at the bottom of this paper.

#### **Recommendation 1 – Awareness training for all management roles and associated 360 degree feedback**

**LAS Action** – Rather than implementing training just for managers, this will be mandatory e-learning for all staff. In addition, a training session took place on 24<sup>th</sup> June for EMT and SMT members which covered awareness, early intervention and prevention. 1:1 coaching sessions have been arranged for senior managers. As part of our review of ‘people performance management’ we will implement plans for managers to give and receive feedback.

#### **Recommendation 2 – The creation of an organisational Dignity at Work strategy or similar where not already in place together with the introduction of champions at EMT/SMT level.**

**LAS Action** – A Dignity at Work strategy is currently being scoped and will include the establishment of champions.

#### **Recommendation 3 – Training for all managers on early intervention and prevention techniques, together with clarity regarding their responsibilities for addressing bullying and harassment in the workplace.**

**LAS Action** – This will be covered in the training mentioned under recommendation 1. However, further to this, additional training will take place at an All Senior Managers session in August.

#### **Recommendation 4 – Training for Internal Investigating Officers who will investigate complaints of bullying and harassment.**

**LAS Action** – We are also establishing a £15,000 contingency fund to procure external Investigating Officers to ensure that we are able to fully investigate in a timely manner any potential cases raised following the publication of the Bullying & Harassment report. In parallel, we are identifying internal Investigating Officers in the organisation who will be appropriately trained.

#### **Recommendation 5 – Creation of a Harassment Advisory Service.**

**LAS Action** – We have set up a telephone advisory line available to all staff. The service will listen to the concerns of staff members, provide counselling, provide guidance on appropriate options for individuals and liaise with internal HR specialists and Investigating Officers. To ensure this service is available immediately for staff, whilst the internal resources are being identified we will use an external expert to provide the service for a 12 week period. The external consultants will provide anonymised reporting on patterns and trends and will handover to HR specialists to progress cases where the staff member wishes to proceed.

**Recommendation 6 – Re-launch the Bullying and Harassment policy.**

**LAS Action** – We have produced a new one-page easy to follow guide for staff to use to decide what action to take if they are experiencing or witnessing inappropriate behaviour. We are currently reviewing the bullying and harassment policy, including engagement with staff-side, to ensure that it is up to date and fit for purpose. Once this review is complete it will be re-launched with guidance for all staff. We will ensure that this guidance is relevant and helpful for staff from both an employer and employee perspective.

**Recommendation 7 – Resurveying employees in six months’ time to monitor progress.**

**LAS Action** – Due to the high number of surveys that we have asked staff to undertake during the last 12 months we are reviewing the most appropriate way to assess progress and will use the NHS staff survey later this year. However, we anticipate the need to undertake more detailed analysis.

We have costed the actions stated above and have identified funding. We estimate total costs to be approximately £75,000.

**5.2 Further Actions**

In addition to the specific actions above we are finalising our Organisational Development plan for the year ahead. Relevant work streams under development include;

**Creating the right culture for our service**

We are developing the values and behaviours of LAS; this critical activity will be the foundation for all other cultural improvement activities. We plan to raise awareness of our values and co-design our behaviours with our staff. This will form the focus of our Staff Conference (c.400 staff) at the end of July.

**Strengthening our leadership**

We will define the leadership competencies for and current future leaders. Through investing in both the release of staff time and bespoke development courses we are aiming to improve our workforce leadership competencies; providing them with the requisite skills and support to deliver in their roles as leaders. This has already commenced with over 180 Clinical Team Leaders undertaking a two day development programme with Cranfield University.

In addition we will be reviewing the effectiveness of communication and the interface between the tiers of management and also appraising the decision rights across the management levels to optimise our management structure and empower managers at local level.

**Supporting people management**

We are undertaking a review of people performance management as part of broader approach to appraisals, this will include a review of the competencies and capabilities we assess against, our approach to assessing an individual’s performance, our style of giving and receiving feedback and will require an organisation wide Training Needs Analysis.

### 5.3 Timeline for implementation

Figure 1. below provides a high level timeline of actions in response to the bullying and harassment review;

ID	Task Name	Finish	Jun 2015				Jul 2015				Aug 2015				Sep 2015				Oct 2015				Nov 2015				Dec 2015			
			31/5	7/6	14/6	21/6	28/6	5/7	12/7	19/7	26/7	2/8	9/8	16/8	23/8	30/8	6/9	13/9	20/9	27/9	4/10	11/10	18/10	25/10	1/11	8/11	15/11	22/11	29/11	6/12
1	EMT/SMT Training session	24/06/2015	◆																											
2	1:1 Coaching Sessions	31/07/2015																												
3	Dignity at work strategy developed	31/08/2015																												
4	All staff to have completed mandatory training	31/12/2015																												
5	Investigating officers to be identified and trained	30/10/2015																												
6	Telephone Advisory line run by external providers	30/09/2015																												
7	Telephone Advisory line run in house	31/12/2015																												
8	Development and re-launch of bullying and harassment policy	31/08/2015																												
9	Staff Conference focussing on LAS Values	31/07/2015	◆																											
10	Senior Managers awareness training	31/08/2015																												