



September 2008

It's your call – update on Service Improvement Forum

## Introduction

Thank you for taking part in the London Ambulance Service's first Service Improvement Forum which we held at the end of March.

Since the forum we have been looking at how we can use your ideas in our plans for the future. This newsletter looks back at the day and highlights some of the key ideas we discussed.



## Our plans for the future

The Service Improvement Forum focused on our plans for the future. We have a Strategic Plan that outlines where we want to be in 2013. We plan to move away from a one-size fits all service, to one where all our patients receive care tailored to their needs.

We wanted to hear your views on our plans for the future. We explained the five key areas of the Strategic Plan and asked for your feedback on the proposals you heard.

The feedback you gave us will ensure that we provide a service that cares for all our patients equally.

## Accessing the London Ambulance Service



The first session focused on how people access us and how we share information with other healthcare services to further improve the care we provide.

We are currently exploring how we can ensure that all Londoners and visitors to London are able to access our services regardless of disability or language.

Two key projects were explained during the presentation. The first was our work with the speech and hearing impaired community to find a way they can access the Service.

The second is the use of translation cards by ambulance staff to improve how we communicate with people who do not have English as their first language.

General feedback on these ideas was positive and there were lots of suggestions about how we could further improve access to our service, for example easy-read aids which explain how to phone for help in an emergency.

People were keen to see us work to increase the number of staff who speak additional languages. This was also seen as beneficial for when the Olympic Games come to London in 2012.

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**We want to ensure that Londoners and visitors to London are able to access our services regardless of disability or language.**

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Pupils from the Warren School worked with Service staff on an 'Insight into Management' project.

Many of you felt that an important way to improve access is to raise public awareness about us, in particular educating people, and where appropriate their carers, about what to expect when help arrives. Another popular idea was to increase the amount of work we do with school children of all ages – either about dialing 999 or working for the ambulance service. It was also the first session where a lot of you suggested that we should consider charging people who call for an ambulance when they may not need one.

We also plan to improve the technology we use, including the introduction of a way to electronically record patient details.

There was a large amount of support for us sharing information with other organisations but you told us that we must show that we are able to share this information securely. The importance of keeping your information secure was particularly important when we talked about creating a special register of people's specific needs

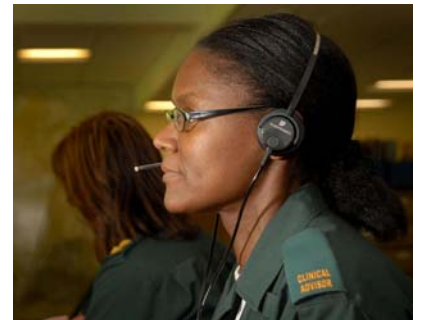
## How we respond to calls

We are currently making changes to the way we respond to emergency calls. This is to ensure that we provide the best possible care for our patients. A number of new initiatives have been introduced, which we wanted to hear your views on.

We are increasing the number of single responders – a single member of ambulance staff who can respond to incidents either by car or, in some areas, by motorbike or pushbike. We know that this is very different from the traditional response of an ambulance.



The reaction to single responders was largely positive, as people understood that it means we will be able to get to patients more quickly. However, many people also wanted to be reassured about how we will make sure our staff are safe and well when on duty.



We also plan to increase the number of Clinical Telephone Advisors who provide advice over the telephone to those patients who do not require an immediate response. General feedback was that whilst this is a positive idea, it is not what people would expect when they phone for help.



People were extremely positive about the idea of not having to go to hospital Accident & Emergency departments and instead, where appropriate, being treated at a local urgent care centre or minor injuries unit.



Another recent introduction to our service is the role of ambulance community responders – members of the public who volunteer to be sent to patients in a life-threatening condition. They are able to give patient life-saving treatment in situations where every minute counts, such as cardiac arrest, chest pain or difficulty in breathing.

This idea was largely well received but you wanted to know more about the knowledge and ability of the volunteers.

It was suggested that publicity could explain the training volunteers have to go through in order to respond to an emergency call, as well as the types of incidents they attend.

You were keen to see us educate the public about the way we are changing. It was suggested that by telling people about how we are changing, they will understand how the initiatives we have introduced will benefit patients.

## Our workforce

We have developed a plan to ensure that our workforce reflects the cultural diversity of London. Attracting a more diverse workforce is currently an extremely important issue for us. We were interested to hear people's ideas about what would make people want to work for us, and how we could increase the diversity of our workforce.

Public education was once again seen as the main way to highlight the career opportunities available in the ambulance service.

The forum highlighted that there are stereotypes about working for us that we need to address if we want to create a more diverse workforce.

These include:

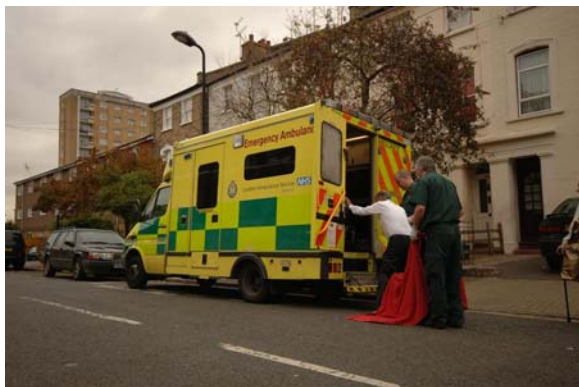
- the gender balance of our workforce
- the age of our staff
- cultural perceptions
- working shifts and fitting work around child care.

Your suggestions included working with specific community groups to promote careers with us and working with schools.

## How we operate

In order for our service to run smoothly, we need to make sure that we are working efficiently and in a way that provides value for money.

We are exploring how we can use our fleet more flexibly across the whole of London. We asked you to tell us what you think of our current vehicles and we received a positive response.



Your feedback told us that our vehicles are very visible and our new ambulances are much easier for you to get in and out of. However, we were asked what we would be doing to make our vehicles more environmentally friendly and many of you said that speed bumps can make a journey uncomfortable.

We are also looking at how we are funded and you made suggestions on how we could receive funding in the future. Many of you felt that we should charge for misuse of our service, for example patients who have to receive treatment

on our alternative response vehicle, which is more popularly known as the 'booze bus'.

Whilst some of you felt that we should be paid for each call we attend, others felt no need to move away from the current target-driven system. Some people suggested that we receive funding on the basis of good clinical results and positive outcomes for patients.

During this session, there was a strong message from the audience that whatever changes are made to the way we are funded, we must always focus on providing the best clinical care.



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### Your suggestions:

“Stress that you can have a career with the ambulance service.”

“Work with local communities to explain what careers are available.”

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## Planning for 2012 Olympic Games

We are already planning for the 2012 Olympic Games and working with previous host nations to ensure that the London Olympics runs as smoothly as possible.

We are leading the national ambulance response to the Olympics and whilst there is plenty of time, we wanted to hear what you think we should be doing.

One of the key issues that emerged in the feedback was the concern over how the Games will affect day-to-day business and how money is invested in our service.

During the Olympics, we must be able to provide our normal level of service to the rest of London – this will mean bringing in extra resources during the Games period and training volunteer co-responders to assist in an emergency. Many of you asked how this additional cover would be funded.



We will also have to be able to treat visitors who do not speak English, which means there will be an increased need for translation and interpretation services. One of your suggestions was to provide information packs for visitors so that they know how to get help and contact the emergency services.

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**“During the Olympics, we must be able to provide our normal level of cover.”**

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The feedback from this session was incredibly useful, and many ideas were put forward about how we could use athletes to front powerful campaigns on a range of issues.

We also asked how we could ensure that the Olympics benefit the health of Londoners beyond 2012. Suggestions included additional staff training as well as being able to use any new health services brought in during the Games.

## Conclusion

The feedback we received during the Service Improvement Forum was incredibly valuable and we have been looking at how your suggestions can help us develop further some of our plans for the future.

One of our aims was to highlight any areas where we may need to work harder to make sure that all Londoners receive the same service.

We received many ideas on how we can educate the public about what we do. The event also highlighted areas where we many need to ensure that we keep the public up-to-date on our progress.

Thank you once again for taking part in the Service Improvement Forum and giving your time to tell us what you think about your London Ambulance Service.

Kathy Jones,  
Director of Service Development