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Dear Khadir,

I am writing to you on behalf of LAS UNISON Branch. Our branch continues to be greatly concerned over the level of ambulance cover the London Ambulance Service are currently providing and believe that more can and should be done to improve performance. Although we have repeatedly written and last week met with service management we have been unable to address the issues raised.

We observe the reduction of operational hours covering double crewed ambulance and fast response units over the past six weeks from 95% of the planned hours to 90% and the service management leaving core vehicles on station rosters purposely uncovered. We understand the face to face contacts made by the service over this period has not significantly increased however also recognise the reduction of ambulance availability due to an increase in vehicle off the road time and increased job cycle time attributed to the complication around responding to suspected Corvus-19 calls. We understand patients frequently continue to wait long periods of time after calling 999 for an ambulance to respond and there are frequent periods of tens and sometimes hundreds of calls being held for an ambulance to be available. The national performance indicator for our largest patient group, C2 response times, remains constantly well below the national target and this group of calls contain some of our sickest patients including heart attacks. The strain on our operational staff is further compounded by the lack of rest breaks staff are currently benefiting from which we believe to be under 4% given a break during their shift.

This situation cannot continue and it puts our members and crucially the people of London at unnecessary risk. The demand profile we roster our staff to painfully implemented in the last year with unpopular rosters on stations being now entirely ignored and by particularly leaving daytime and weekday shifts uncovered it pushes out staff to further undertake an additional increase in night work we know to be damaging to staff health and well being.

This weekend's confusion over operational staff's respiratory personal protective equipment in cases dealing with potentially infectious patients gives us less confidence in the commitment of the service to our member's health and safety. Last week we were given assurances that more would be done to adequately fit test staff at an increased rate and ensure wide distribution of FFP3 masks (that being the recommended mask type for dealing with patients suspected of covid-19 infection and potentially requiring aerosol generating procedures according to Public Health England) with additional measures to ensure those that failed testing were provided further testing and protective options. We have yet to be informed of the additional fit testing method, how this will be staffed and are still having reports back from representatives that stations continue to lack certain mask supplies. We have also yet to be shown alternative measures available for those staff that continue to fail fit testing of the available masks.

The pressures our service are under is unlikely to subside in the very near future therefore we urge the London Ambulance Service management to maximise the ambulance cover at this time by attempting to fully staff all core vehicles, this will help alleviate the strain our service is experiencing, reduce the workload on our staff and enable the response time to reduce thus providing a safer response for our patients. We further ask that the service answer our concerns relating to respiratory personal protective equipment and resolve the issues we have described.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eddie Brand', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Eddie Brand