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Dear Daniel,

We are saddened to be writing once again on behalf of the London Ambulance Service Branch of UNISON so soon after the letter we sent in March this year, to the then CEO Garret Emerson - (London Package Improving working lives)

We write in frustration on the particular issues of the estates strategy, the consolidation of our ambulance stations across London and the persistent instabilities in the operational workforce planning and deployment.

At the start of the pandemic in 2020, LAS UNISON representatives and members were understanding and in full support of our workplaces being consolidated after we saw many of our staff taken unwell or having to self-isolate and to have direct access to management and PPE in less places. Our representatives helped with the closure of some of the workplaces and were informed that this will only be until March 2021, after the winter pressures. During the summer of 2020 we also found our service spending funds, in our opinion, on unnecessary porta cabins, shower blocks (that were never used) and even replacing kitchens when it wasn't required, all under the auspices of "well it's covid funding".

Then in early 2021 the London Ambulance Service management views on consolidation changed to become part of the "estates strategy" where the original reasons for consolidation no longer applied.

It is so disappointing that the London Ambulance Service UNISON branch, our representatives and our members were misled.

We continue to see many of our members having to travel further to work, losing parking on their workplaces, having to park on the streets, in public car parks, finding their cars vandalised and being crammed into sometimes smaller workplaces than their original places of work. This situation is compounded by the additional supplementary staff the LAS have brought in and the continued to maintain distancing measures in our workplaces. All whilst we have seen unprecedented demand in calls they are expected to deal with and more often than not being off late most shifts and they have had enough!

The latest letter from AACE (3rd August 2021) to UNISON Ambulance Sector states "staff safety and welfare continues to be a priority area of focus for all Trusts"

Consolidation and the impact it brings does nothing to address this.

Dockside - Whilst we appreciate the ongoing issues regarding St Andrews House, Bow and finances with the upkeep. We increasingly feel that the dockside solution is not the answer.

Remembering that we provide a 24 hour, 365 days a year service, what were we thinking of? Looking at Dockside, which was probably built as a Monday to Friday, 9-5, office environment, stuck in the middle of nowhere with limited facilities for our members to use.

Yet again we will be losing parking spaces, the public transport links are at best poor, and are not always available when some of our members start and finish their duties. Whilst the Staff Side have been kept informed, we have not had sufficient opportunities at the earliest stages to engage with the process leading up to the decision to pursue the Dockside option and we do not feel the concerns of our members we have represented to management have been given due regard.

We support the idea of modern Ambulance Deployment Centres, of course we support our members having better facilities to carry out the great work that they continue to do, but this also requires our shift workers that carry their PPE, spare uniform etc. being able travel to their workplaces and to park their cars.

Many of our members are being priced out of living in London and are having to move further afield so the recent communications to Hub 1 Staff regarding the public transport links has started to send shockwaves to our members and does nothing for trying to retain our staff. We continue to hear that there are delays to hub 1 and found out this week that planning permission has not even been granted yet.

In March we also wrote to the LAS CEO, with seven requests to improve the working lives of our members in the LAS. Although the then CEO replied in April committing to working in partnership on each issue and agreeing actions that will support the delivery of each commitment, we have yet to undertake any of that work and have seen little progress in our workforce stability and the issues we outlined. There has been no discussion with us to look at safe staffing levels, no discussion on how we roster clinical staff, no discussion on an up to date demand profile and no discussion on the operational workforce strategy. In addition we see a continuing reliance on using incentivised overtime, supplementary staff, private Ambulance providers and associated interim rosters both taking a heavy toll on the stability of our core rostered staff.

The outlook for our members working lives and the ability for the LAS to provide even adequate patient care towards the winter and the pressures it brings is looking bleak and given the repeated delays at hub 1 and the decision taken regarding Dockside We are afraid to say we cannot support consolidation or the move from St Andrews Bow any longer.

LAS UNISON requests that consolidation of Ambulance Stations be discontinued by the end of October 2021, and we work together in partnership to look at the problems with Dockside, if this is not forthcoming we will be taking advice from UNISON London region, which may require a formal dispute being registered. We will continue to consult with our members about this issue going forward.

Additionally LAS UNISON requests urgent discussions to begin work within our Partnership structure to address the workforce issues we have described above and in our letter to you back in March with the aim of creating better stability and a clear short, medium and long term workforce strategy for our Operational and Integrated Patient Care staff.

Look forward to your reply and let's hope we can find some solutions?

Kind regards,

On behalf of London Ambulance UNISON

Eddie Brand - LAS UNISON Branch Secretary Tim Stephens - LAS UNISON Chair Person