

Overview and scrutiny of health

BRIEFING

Summary

This briefing provides background information and outlines the process for the formation of an informal body of the Association of London Government [ALG] and the Greater London Assembly [GLA] to “scrutinise” the London Ambulance Service (LAS).

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- ◆ Note the process for the formation of the joint ALG and GLA body
- ◆ Consider the draft terms of reference.

Background

The ALG and GLA have discussed a joint review of the LAS. In May 2003 the Department of Health (DoH) issued guidance to support the local authority overview and scrutiny powers to review health and health services. The guidance also sets out the duties on the NHS to support those powers and offers good practice guidance on undertaking the health scrutiny process.

The guidance refers to pan-London services and mentions the LAS. It says, “...It is recommended that authorities seek to work with the London Assembly and the ALG to ensure the best use of resources and to avoid the development of supplanting scrutiny regimes. It must be remembered, however, that it is the London Boroughs and the Common Council of the City of London that have the legal powers and must remain in the lead role.”

At its meeting on the 18 June 2003, the ALG Health and Social Care Steering Group agreed the composition of an informal body of the ALG and GLA to conduct a review of the LAS comprising Forum members (not members of their borough executive) and scrutiny committee members.

Further discussions have taken place between the Chairs of the Scrutiny Network and Health and Social Care. It is proposed that Cllr Stephen Burke lead the ALG in this review.

The London Ambulance Service

The LAS is the largest free ambulance service in the world, caring for more than one and a half million patients every year. It is the only London-wide NHS Trust. It has two main functions - the provision of an Accident and Emergency service to respond to 999 calls and the Patient Transport Service, which performs an important role in taking patients to and from their hospital appointments.

In 2001 they began a four-year Improvement Programme, the aim of which is to establish a world-class ambulance service

The GLA

The ALG members will join with the London Assembly Health Committee to carry out the scrutiny. The Assembly Health Committee remit is to identify and investigate any health issues that are of concern to London as a whole. Political proportionality consists of 2 Conservatives, 2 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrats, and 1 Green.

The Next Steps

- ◆ The ALG and GLA will propose nominations. Political proportionality for ALG members will be 3 Labour, 2 Conservatives and 1 Liberal Democrat.
- ◆ All members of the review will attend an initial meeting to formalise the process.
- ◆ It is proposed that there will be approximately 3 further evidentiary hearings as well as a meeting to consider a final report. Information between meetings will be sent via email or post.

Due to LAS commitments the process will not start until December 2003 with evidentiary hearings taking place in December 2003 or January 2004.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- ◆ Note the process for the formation of the joint ALG and GLA body
- ◆ Consider the draft terms of reference (see below).

Proposed Terms of Reference for the LAS Scrutiny

1.1 The scrutiny will examine the current performance of the London Ambulance Service, its accountability, and proposals for improvement.

1.2 The objectives of the scrutiny would be:

- ◆ To examine the current performance of the London Ambulance Service in comparison with other ambulance services in the UK, and the views on London Ambulance Service performance of other key stakeholders in London such as the GLA, ALG, London Boroughs and voluntary organisations.
- ◆ To consult with service users and the wider community and consider how the LAS engage Londoners in the use of their services.
- ◆ To examine what progress has been achieved by the London Ambulance Service against the improvement programme for 2001/2002.
- ◆ To examine the London Ambulance Service's relationship with other emergency services.
- ◆ The safety of paramedics and on the basis of what is learnt, discuss how to extend this work to other A&E staff