

Policy Briefing: London Ambulance Service - Improving Mental Health Services

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<http://www.londonambulance.nhs.uk/pdf/Improving%20Mental%20Health%20Services%20Final.pdf>

Purpose of document

The Patient and Public Involvement Solutions were asked by the London Ambulance Service to engage with people who have experience of having a mental health condition or of using mental health services across London in the past, or who might need to use services in the future. This was to find out how the ambulance service could be improved for them. Sixty-three people including London Ambulance Staff (LAS) participated in 7 focus groups discussions. They discussed their experiences and provided feedback from the perspective of being a mental health patient, service user and carer. London Ambulance staff (LAS) talked about their experiences from the point of view of providing a service to people with mental health needs, and their carers.

Summary of contents

The report summarises the findings based on responses to 5 questions that were asked during focus group discussions. The questions are: 1) When you think of the London Ambulance Services, what does it mean to you? 2) When you contact London Ambulance Service in an emergency, what do you want to happen next? 3) Is there a delay before an ambulance can get to you? - What is important to you about the way this is managed? 4) What would make you want to write a thank you letter? 5) What advice would you give London Ambulance Service staff about helping people with mental health needs? The responses to the questions in the report are written through the words and phrases used by the people who took part in the focus groups to reflect what they said as closely as possible.

Summary of outcomes

Some key themes were drawn from the feedback that was given during the focus groups. They include: 1) initial contact and response from emergency handlers; 2) education and training in mental health; 3) additional and community based support services; 4) receiving the right kind of help before a crisis; 5) being referred to, or transported to the right place using a range of options; and 6) using feedback from patients, carers and service users to make improvements.

Summary of recommendations

- Better education and training in mental health to improve awareness and understanding of the specific needs of people who use mental health services.
- Ensure that LAS know what local community based services such as community and voluntary schemes, are available to people.
- Provide a range of options in addition to A&E and mental health hospitals so that people with mental health needs get the appropriate help and support.
- Introduce The Street Triage System more widely to allow access to a range of professionals for those in a crisis situation.
- Allow patients, carers, service users and LAS to get more involved in providing feedback and recommendations for improvements to services.

Further information and resources - Patient and Public Involvement Solutions

<http://www.patientpublicinvolvement.com/> London Ambulance Service - 5-Year Strategy

http://www.londonambulance.nhs.uk/about_us/plans_for_the_future/our_five-year_strategy.aspx

Document summarised on behalf of Healthwatch Merton by: N Apprey-Abraham

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