

# PATIENTS' FORUM

**FOR THE LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE**

Chair: Malcolm Alexander

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**Chair**  
**Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee**  
**London Borough of Brent**

**Dear Councillor,**

## **Strokes services in your Borough**

As you know the National Audit Office has estimated that 550 deaths could be avoided annually if hospital stroke services were organised effectively, and over 1500 people who suffer stroke could fully recover.

The Patients' Forum has recently surveyed all 31 Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in London to find out how effective local services are. Evidence from our survey (which we are happy to share with you), shows that access to emergency stroke services in London is patchy and sometimes grossly inadequate and is based on post-code rather than need.

Older people are the main victims of stroke, yet the Government has prioritised effective service for the under 75s in their 10 year stroke plan. Reviews of hospital services by the Royal College of Physicians have found that effectiveness of stroke treatment varies considerably across London; with many hospitals providing poor services, e.g. patients with stroke treated

in general hospital wards, have a 14% to 25% higher risk of death those treated in specialist stroke units.

Effective hospital stroke services require provision of 24 hr access to CT scanners for rapid brain examination to find whether the stroke is treatable. Scanning and anti-clot treatment (when appropriate) within 3 hrs of onset of stroke symptoms, can save many lives and substantially reduce disability. Specialist Stroke Teams are essential for expert care.

The purpose of this letter is to ask you if you will ascertain through contacts with your local health service the following information:

- a) Whether hospitals in your constituency plan to provide an emergency stroke service, which includes a CT scan and anti-clot treatment within 3 hours of symptom onset?
- b) When a 24 hours/7 day acute stroke service, as described in (a) be available to all people in need?
- c) When arrangements will be established in your constituency for LAS paramedics to have direct access to an emergency stroke service, which includes a CT scan and where necessary anti-clot treatment within 3 hours of symptom onset?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Alexander  
Chair