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Cc: Steve West, SCAS Local Area Director

20 January 2015

Dear Annet,

Ambulance Response Times in Buckinghamshire

You will be aware that at the Buckinghamshire Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee meeting of 25th November 2014 (<https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=5747>), the committee received a paper for their item on South Central Ambulance Service. I am writing to highlight concerns the committee had with the ambulance response times in Buckinghamshire, and the paramedic vacancy rate in the county which appears to be connected with the response time performance.

The table below was included in the report provided to the committee, and shows ambulance response times in the year to date in each of the Buckinghamshire districts.

Performance – By Area: April – October 2014						
Performance to October 2014	Thames Valley	Bucks	Aylesbury Vale	Chiltern	Wycombe	South Bucks
Red 1, 8 Minutes	76.24%	72.05%	77.65%	56.86%	75.67%	65.71%
Red 2, 8 Minutes	74.42%	69.16%	73.79%	51.70%	73.88%	64.59%
Red 19 Minutes	95.68%	94.24%	94.08%	90.13%	95.23%	97.85%

In the report it was explained that performance measures are commissioned and reviewed at Thames Valley contract level, which up to October 2014 SCAS had been achieving. I understand from the latest SCAS Council of Governors Board Papers that in November they



fell short of their targets for all 3 key national response time standards (71.9% on red 1 against a target of 75%, 73% on red 2 against a 75% target, and 94.7% on red 19 against a 95% target) across the Thames Valley.

I can appreciate that by analysing performance at lower levels there is inevitably going to be a degree of variance given the mix of urban and rural areas in the Thames Valley. However, the table above would suggest that given the performance in Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe, SCAS is not delivering its target response times for the entire southern half of Buckinghamshire.

When we questioned SCAS on this at our committee meeting it seemed staffing levels were a key factor in response times. In Buckinghamshire we were informed that SCAS had 120 (WTE) staff in post against a planned level of 152 (which will increase to 201 with the proposed new rota increasing the number of non-clinical posts).

SCAS explained at our meeting and in their papers that they are attempting to mitigate the staff vacancy rates through their first responder scheme, and are also on a recruitment drive overseas and are working with Oxford Brookes University to increase student paramedics.

I have concerns that over the winter period where the whole health service is under great strain, that inadequate ambulance response times in the south of the county could be resulting in avoidable harm to patients. I have been made aware of some anecdotal evidence of recent events where patients locally in need of urgent attention experienced very long ambulance waits. As the service commissioner are you able to confirm the following:

- Do you receive data on the number of red category calls each month that do not receive a response time within the target?
- For these cases do you then receive data on how long they had to wait, and whether this wait had a detrimental impact on their outcome?
- Are you able to share the latest data you have, and provide some reassurance that patients are not being harmed by ambulance response times?

I look forward to receiving your response to these questions, as well as your views on the current level of SCAS performance and the measures being taken to improve this. Please can I request a response by 20th February.

Yours sincerely



Angela Macpherson, County Councillor
Chairman, Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee



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