



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Dear Pauline,

Thank you to you and your colleagues for giving evidence to the Health and Sport Committee on [Tuesday 2 February 2021](#).

The evidence session was our third with the Scottish Ambulance Service this parliamentary session. These sessions have enabled us to explore trends and developments in the SAS performance over several years. The most recent evidence session also gave us an opportunity to consider the impact of COVID-19 on the SAS.

The Committee has some follow up questions from the evidence session which we would be grateful to receive responses to.

### **Service demand**

You told the Committee that at the start of the first lockdown that the SAS workload dropped dramatically including from April 2020 a decrease of around 13% in unscheduled 999 demand. (COL 1)

- **What assessment has been done of the reasons for this drop in demand? Are you assured it was because there was a reduction in need for your service?**
- **Has there been an assessment of whether a reduction in unscheduled 999 demand resulted in an increase in individuals presenting to other NHS services for example Emergency Departments or GP services?**

## Performance measures

At the evidence session we explored the continuing challenge of response times. You emphasised the importance of considering response times within the context of other performance measures.

- **When does the SAS expect performance measures will be in place to enable a comprehensive assessment to be made of the services role within a system wide approach and the impact the service has on outcomes? When will this data enable comparisons to be made on annual performance? (Col 14-15)**

## British Association for Immediate Care Scotland responders and community first responders

You told the Committee the use of British Association for Immediate Care Scotland responders and community first responders was briefly suspended as a result of COVID-19 but they have now been retrained and are ready to assist (Col 12)

- **Why has the approach to using community first responders changed during the course of the pandemic?**
- **Have community first responders been considered patient-facing staff in terms of being prioritised for vaccination?**

## Staffing

The SAS has consistently been a poor performer in relation to staff satisfaction and sickness levels. At the evidence session there was some suggestion that the SAS position was inevitable given the nature of the services it provides making it unfair to compare against other territorial boards and other special health boards. You suggested the SAS position was reflective of similar services across the UK. (Col 16) It was encouraging to hear you tell the Committee that the Non-covid related absence rate has declined and that it is currently 2 per cent lower than the figure for last year. (Col 8,19).

- **We note that in other areas of the UK ambulance service rates of sickness do not appear as high as they have been for Scotland. On what basis do you place your assessment of SAS performance being reflective of other areas of the UK?**
- **If it is not appropriate to compare the SAS with other NHS boards performance should more comparisons be made between it and the performance of other Ambulance services in the UK?**

Reference was made to steps being taken to improve communication and engagement with leaders and managers including foundation training plans for leaders and managers. (Col 17)

- **Have you identified particular areas of your service, regions across Scotland or a particular management level where concerns lie in relation to management performance? If so how have these been targeted?**
- **How will you assess whether the steps taken to improve management performance are working and have led to improvements in staff experience?**

You referenced some reduction in dignity at work grievances in the past 6 months but were unsure if this was the result of COVID. **What are rates? What would you expect them to be?**

It would be helpful to have your response by Friday 5 March.

Yours sincerely

Lewis Macdonald

Convener

Health and Sport Committee

