

1 June 2016

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Huw Merriman, MP (Bexhill & Battle)
House of Commons
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Via email: huw.merriman.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Mr Merriman

Patient Transport Service

Thank you for your letter of 26 May 2016 and your questions regarding the Sussex non-emergency Patient Transport Service (PTS) commissioned by the Sussex Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and managed by Coperforma since 1 April 2016.

I will answer your questions in order if I may:

1. Why were Coperforma selected as the preferred PTS contractor?

In 2014, the South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECAMB) informed the seven Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in Sussex that it did not wish to extend the patient transport service contract beyond the schedule expiry date of 31 March 2015.

A one year extension was then agreed with SECAMB to continue delivering the service until 31 March 2016 to enable the seven CCGs to undertake a widespread review of NHS Patient Transport, commission a new service and engage with the public, current service users, local stakeholders including acute trusts and transport providers.

The seven Sussex Clinical Commissioning Groups, led by High Weald Lewes Havens CCG, followed an open competitive procurement process. A contract notice was issued in the OJEU on 20 May 2015 together with a Pre-Qualifying Questionnaire (PQQ) which tested the capacity, capability and eligibility of interested candidates.

Four organisations completed the PQQ (including one from the public sector), three organisations were assessed as passing the PQQ (including one from the public sector) and an Invitation to Tender (ITT) was issued to all organisations on 3 August 2015.

Of the three invitations to tender issued, one was received by the deadline for submission. This was evaluated in line with criteria published at the start of the process by a group of subject matter experts, clinicians and patient representatives. The bid was assessed as demonstrating "a



comprehensive response". The award of contract to Coperforma was approved by each of the seven Sussex CCG Governing Bodies.

2. Why were SECAMB allowed to walk away from providing PTS (we note that SECAMB did so but would like to know why they were permitted to do so)?

In 2014, the South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECAMB) informed the seven Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in Sussex that it did not wish to continue its contract as the provider of Patient Transport Services in Sussex beyond the expiry date of 31 March 2015. This being the case, the CCGs were obligated to conduct a fair, open and transparent procurement process to source an alternative provider.

3. Notwithstanding that SECAMB may have requested to walk away from providing PTS, we have been informed that SECAMB were subsequently denied the right to rebid for the contract. Could you confirm the correct position with this regard?

SECAMB attended engagement events and, in fact, responded to the PQQ stage of the procurement and following evaluation were notified that they had successfully progressed to the next stage of the procurement by commissioners. They chose not to submit a tender. Feedback from SECAMB was requested as to why they did not proceed with the bid and commissioners were advised that SECAMB felt unable to submit a substantial bid within the disclosed financial envelope.

4. What handover procedures were put in place between Coperforma and SECAMB?

Coperforma produced a mobilisation plan focusing on IT, estates, finance, HR and workforce issues, including staff transfer and training and operational readiness.

Planning for the handover of the service included Coperforma opening and kitting out new offices in Sussex for the Demand Centres, supporting the effective transfer of staff and ensuring that sufficient transport resources were available to meet anticipated patient demand.

An overlay team was also recruited ahead of the contract commencement to provide additional resources to support the first two weeks of the contract, for staff being transferred who had not had training prior to 1 April, to be trained. Use of the mobile booking App and the crew data portal were tested at all bases prior to the service's launch.

5. Why was there a failure to deliver the PTS service when Coperforma first commenced the contract?

The overall standard of the service since its launch on 1 April has not been acceptable and both Coperforma and the Sussex CCGs have issued a public apology to all affected patients.

A combination of technology issues and problems with patient data and journey records created severe delays and missed appointments for some patients. This triggered a significant volume of



telephone calls to Coperforma's call centres, which in turn created further issues, with patients and healthcare staff unable to get through.

The reasons for this are being independently investigated.

6. Why, some weeks after the initial poor delivery, does the PTS service continue to fail our constituent patients?

The operational difficulties experienced are both in the booking function, with patients and NHS staff not being able to access the phone lines, and transport provision with patients not being picked up and demand exceeding capacity.

To deal with this Coperforma are:

- Recruiting and training additional call-handling and booking staff for their Sussex Demand Centres
- Sourcing additional vehicles from transport providers
- Administering further training and logins for healthcare professionals across Sussex to use the online PTS booking system.
- Conducting an internal review of usage of the service's mobile app by transport crews in order to identify any additional staff training needs.

Call handling wait times for patients have improved since 1 April and Coperforma is working with hospital trusts to increase the use of its online booking system by hospital staff.

Unfortunately, in the first month of the service many journeys were booked and organised outside of the core online system. This meant that many bookings, the journeys made and the final outcomes (on time and completion) were not recorded on the system. As more NHS staff are registered onto and use the system - and as more crews become ever more competent in using it - more journeys will be recorded and an exact picture of timeliness of PTS journeys will be captured.

7. How much time has the CCG given Coperforma to turn this position around?

Our current action plan sets targets for improvement until mid-July.

8. What performance and service levels did the CCG insist upon in its contract with Coperforma?

The Sussex commissioners of PTS engaged with a number of stakeholders including patients, public and patient groups, and NHS Trusts when writing the new contract for PTS. A common theme was the timeliness of patient transport provided.

To address this, the commissioners reviewed the Key Performance Indicators that were part of the re tendering process to promote increased contracted timeliness of inbound and outbound journeys for patients.



9. Are these performance and service levels in breach and what are the sanctions, and will they be applied if so?

The contract signed with Coperforma includes a framework for addressing performance and quality issues in line with the National Contract. The intention of the contract is to support the supplier in addressing issues rather than imposing immediate punitive measures which might impact on the supplier's ability to make additional investment to secure improvement. The contract does provide an option for financial sanctions should remedial plans or other agreed action plans not result in improved service delivery.

10. Will patients be compensated for their experiences and, if so, will the public purse pay for such compensation or will Coperforma?

Whilst the new PTS settles in, some patients and/or their relatives may decide to pay for alternative transport for patients who are eligible for the free service but are experiencing difficulties accessing it. On receipt of appropriate documentation and receipts, Coperforma will consider reimbursement on a case-by-case basis.

11. We have been informed that volunteer drivers, used when SECamb operated the PTS, have now been dispensed with. Is this true and, if so, how is this conducive to good community volunteering in Sussex?

Volunteer drivers are and will remain an important element of the PTS. We are aware that Coperforma have criteria for assessing the appropriateness of volunteer vehicles to ensure safe and efficient transport for patients. This may have led to some volunteer drivers no longer being used. Coperforma have highlighted themselves that the application of their criteria could be more flexible in the way it assesses volunteer driver vehicles.

12. What are your next steps for ensuring that our constituents receive a PTS service which meets the description of your web release?

HWLH CCG is working closely with Coperforma, the other Sussex CCGs and hospital trusts to address the issues and enact remedial action and business continuity plans. Specific actions include:

- A Monthly Programme Board to oversee and monitoring the service's performance, risks and operational issues.
- Weekly CCG / Provider meetings to monitor action plans and circulate information on the performance of key metrics to all stakeholders.
- A weekly CCG / Trust / Coperforma escalation call.
- A monthly contract monitoring meeting led by the region's Commissioning Support Unit (CSU), including quality, performance, activity and finance contract reports
- Individual meetings with each hospital trust, Coperforma and CCG to develop specific remedial action plans bespoke to each site and/or geographical area.



- A Remedial Action Plan (RAP) has been developed by HWLH CCG, on behalf of the seven Sussex CCGs, and Coperforma Ltd.

The RAP sets out:

- The actions required and which party is responsible for completion of each action
- The improvement in outcomes and/or other key indicators required
- The date by which an action or improvement is to be achieved and maintained
- The consequences for any party failing to achieve and maintain the improvement required.

Independent investigation

HWLH CCG, on behalf of all seven Sussex CCGs, has commissioned an independent enquiry. It has engaged TIAA, an independent company and one of the leading providers of assurance services to the public sector, to carry out the enquiry. It has asked for a draft report to be available for review by mid-June.

The independent investigation is supported by all organisations (CCGs, Coperforma and SECAMB) and will consider the robustness and transparency of the mobilisation and transition arrangements.

A meeting has been arranged for 8 June and look forward to discussing this issue with you further.

Yours sincerely



Wendy Carberry
Chief Officer

