

19<sup>th</sup> December 2006

Mr M Alexander  
30 Portland Rise  
London  
N4 2PP

Dear Mr Alexander,

I write further to your e-mail of 17<sup>th</sup> November, in which you made a complaint against the Acting Chief Executive of CPPIH, Dr Lowden. Under our complaints policy it is my duty as Chair to respond to a complaint against the Chief Executive. I have now completed my enquiries and this letter comprises my response.

It appears to me that your complaint can be broken down as follows:

- i) that your FSO service was terminated without consultation
- ii) that there was no legal duty on CPPIH to put the support arrangements out to tender
- iii) that the Shaw Trust to whom the tender has now been let is unknown to the Forum and possibly unfit for purpose – and in particular has no diversity policy and is unable to produce records about the diversity of its staff
- iv) that the new arrangements for support of the Forum will undermine the work of the LAS Forum

My response is as follows:

- i) Forum members were informed of the tender process and assessment. They were also consulted, in that their views were indeed taken account of during the tender process:

Forum Members were made aware of the tendering exercise and the timetable attached to it. Forum Members were invited to put themselves forward to be members of the tender panel and assess bids received for their area. We can trace no interest having been received however from LAS Forum members. Two Forum Members were selected from each area, whose opinions contributed to the assessment of organisations tendering to provide Forum Support. Very full information on this was contained in the FSO bulletin dated 6 July 2006 (item 1), clearly marked "Pass on to Forum". It was additionally cascaded to Forum Members in the August September 2006 Forum Focus newsheet.



Following on from the Year 3 FSO contract renewals, Forum Members assessment of FSO performance was embedded into the quarterly Performance and Contract Compliance framework of the Commission. Feedback that was incorporated into the awarding of new contracts was in the form of a formal questionnaire. This questionnaire was sent to each Forum asking for a collective assessment of their respective FSO as at 30 June 2006. The guidance included the suggestion that this assessment should have been minuted as part of a formally constituted Forum Meeting. The Forum Score was included into the weighted average score for the FSO which also included Contract Compliance and Financial Management scores. Any FSO not achieving an aggregated minimum score of 75% was excluded from the Expression of Interest stage of the tendering process.

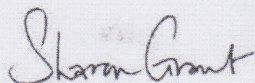
- ii) It is the policy of CPPIH to contract with voluntary or not for profit organisations to provide the necessary support for PPI Forums. Since 2005, it has established an "in-house" option, viewed as a last resort option to be triggered when it was not possible to secure the services of an appropriate voluntary or not-for profit organisation. CPPIH had a clear legal duty on this occasion to re-tender the contract for the support of LAS and every other Forum. Legal advice was sought and CPPIH was advised that it would have been in breach of EU procurement legislation not to have done so on the expiry of the (already extended) contracts in December 2006. An additional factor in this was the variation in contract specifications arising from NHS service reconfigurations . It should be noted also that CPPIH In-House Forum Support Services are not a legal entity, and thus cannot tender to provide support services. Thus all in-house support contracts had to be included in the tender exercise, and there could be no way of knowing which contracts would be bid for by suitable voluntary or not for profit organisations.
- iii) The Shaw Trust is a national charity which has provided forum support in London, East of England, Humberside and Yorkshire, and East Midlands. They have been supporting 30 forums across London since last year, and feedback from these forums has been positive .  
The Shaw Trust does indeed have an Equality and Diversity policy, although my enquiries reveal no record of their being asked to provide it. They also have a dedicated Equality and Diversity Officer reflecting the importance which they attach to this matter. We would not normally however require an FSO to supply us with information as regards the diversity of its staff.



- iv) Whilst I understand the fears which you may have about disruption of forum activity arising from the new arrangements, you will be aware that CPPIH now has a good deal of experience of managing the transfer of forum support from one organisation to another. In turn, the Shaw Trust has itself now had considerable experience of taking over forum support, often in difficult circumstances - not least in London, where it took over from CEMVO and SCOPE. We have been impressed by the performance of the Shaw Trust in these instances, and I am confident that with good will on all sides, the LAS Forum will find the transition a smooth one, and I hope that good working relations will develop quickly. It is important of course that the London Ambulance Service continues to have the benefit of your Forum's considerable knowledge and commitment.

Whilst I cannot uphold your complaint, I hope that this information is helpful to you and other members of the LAS Forum in furthering your understanding of the context in which the changed arrangements have been arrived at. If you require any further information, then please do contact me again.

Yours sincerely,



**SHARON GRANT**  
Chair  
CPPIH