

20 Manor Bridge Court
Tidworth
Wilts SP9 7NH
01980 843156
13th July 2016

Claire Perry MP
House of Commons
Westminster
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Claire,

As you are aware, I chair the Tidworth Community Area Partnership Health & Social Care Group. We meet regularly and at last Thursday's meeting we again discussed our concerns about the South Western Ambulance Service (SWAS) which has remained a concern since you and I first spoke on the matter at the end of 2013. The Group does, of course, accept that ambulance response times in rural districts are inevitably longer than those for urban communities but wonder whether SWAS are using the higher densities of larger towns and cities to 'game' their statistics to give a more favourable impression of their performance (ie. you can underperform in the more sparsely populated areas without hurting your overall performance figures unduly). We would like to be reassured that this is not the case in the Tidworth Community Area and the TCAP H&SC Group has asked me to write to you to seek this reassurance.

Some of the H&SC Group (GP practices in the area) had learnt in a letter (in June) from the South West Ambulance Service Foundation Trust (SWASFT) Executive Medical Director that this area (and Yorkshire) had been chosen for a 'pilot scheme' (*or perhaps a 'trial' ?...*) in ambulance despatch which involved 'recoding' (= downgrading...) certain medical categories from red to amber to increase the time allowed for ambulances to reach the patient. The letter said the trial would start in May for twelve weeks. SWAS call-centre staff confirmed it had actually started in April; which might explain why we had a particularly worrying incident recently when someone at the local GP premises was exhibiting the classic symptoms of a stroke. The staff rang several times for an ambulance, but were told each time that "there was not an ambulance in your area". They knew that only too well but what they wanted was for one to be despatched to this area to pick up a probable stroke victim. National guidelines say that if proper treatment is administered within the 'golden hour', recovery chances are very much better than if treatment doesn't begin until the hour has elapsed. So either SWASFT is insufficiently resourced for the task it is being paid to do, or someone in a call-centre has overridden a GP's clinical diagnosis and downgraded the request for immediate ambulance despatch. Neither is acceptable to us. The several GP practices on Salisbury Plain have already written to NHS England to make this point and would be happy to provide you with evidence.

We would be most grateful if you could approach SWAS again for us and seek these reassurances for the residents of this area. And if it turns out that SWAS are under-resourced now, how much worse will it become when thousands more dependants move back here from Germany?

Yours sincerely

Reia Jones

Chair of TCAP H&SC Group