**Text of letter from Chris Jenkinson to chairs of CCGs in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire**

**Collapse of Private Ambulance Service Ltd**

Four  weeks have now passed since the collapse of Private Ambulance Service contract for the provision of patient transport services in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. I am pleased that during this time we have managed to work closely with colleagues in the CCGs and our East of England Ambulance Trust, helping to maintain service delivery and manage what are very difficult circumstances for the staff.

It was apparent quite early in the contract that PAS Ltd were not capable of delivering the service – senior managers in PAS singularly failed to provide any leadership, operational managers, many of whom transferred with the service, felt disempowered, an absence of resources was compounded by total lack of resilience planning and strategy for communion.

The company experienced problems with cash flow even in the very early days which is not surprising given they carried into the contract a ‘high risk’ credit rating. Problems with administration of payroll resulted in people not being paid correctly, and on reflection if was clearly no coincidence that wages were always short, never overpaid. Suppliers would complain that bills were not being paid and credit lines eventually dried up. Drivers were at times left having to pay for fuel when credit lines were refused. We now know that pension contributions were deducted from wages but never reached their rightful destination, a matter now in the hands of the Pensions Ombudsman.

When the company was placed into administration outstanding wages for the previous month were not paid leaving many suffering real financial hardship. I have listened to many accounts of people needing to borrow from friends and family, banks and loan companies, to simply make ends meet. This is no way for public service workers to be treated. After all, these are people who despite everything still came to work to do their best delivering a service to the public.

The company has statutory creditors so it is unlikely that we will recover any lost earnings from the insolvency process even if there is money left which is unlikely. We continue to liaise with the Insolvency Practitioner on this matter.

My colleagues are working to calculate the loss each individual has suffered prior to and since the collapse of PAS. We now look to you to confirm that in the event that this cannot be recovered from the insolvency process the CCG will guarantee payments so people are not left out of pocket. I will look to you to confirm in your response an agreement in principle, the detail can be left with colleagues to work through in due course.

I have been critical in public about the CCGs and the procurement process and have already called for an independent inquiry to uncover failings in the commission process which resulted in such catastrophic failure of this important service.

I hope that you will recognise that an independent investigation with full public disclosure is essential to restore confidence in the CCGs’ ability to commission services in the future. It would be far better for the CCGs to take the initiative and commission the investigation rather than seek to defend your position in the face of a public campaign. I will also look to you to comment on this in your response.

As this matter has been the subject of media attention and is of public interest I have made a copy of this letter available to the press.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

Chris Jenkinson

Regional Secretary