



**LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE BENEVOLENT FUND  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR THE PERIOD  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

**Chairperson's Annual Report 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

This year as with last year I have to apologise for the delay in producing the chairman's report as with all years the chairman's report cannot be written until the accounts are sorted. As we look around the world we see that the war continues in Ukraine and we hear of natural disasters. On the basis of it these don't seem to be affecting our staff, however the overarching effects of these on the world and countries economy on the back of the Covid pandemic is starting to cause problems. Each year I say the same thing about staff morale and it doesn't seem to improve. Staff continue to be despondent and a number leaving the service. So on the back of all that doom and gloom I write this report.

Despite all that is happening in London and the world, the work and care that our staff provide remind the public of how great the NHS is and what a wonderful job they do.

We are reminded that the Fund was set up to support its members and I've no doubt, that what has happened over the last year will continue to affect our members in different ways and the support of the fund will no doubt be called upon. However as I look back over the last year, if our members have been affected in any way the support and benefits that we offer have not been as utilised as much as it could be.

As the Chairperson I continue to ensure that the fund upholds the constitution and by-laws it was set up on, and also seek to maintain a great financial position in order that we can continue to:

*"provide support and assistance in the relief of severe but temporary financial hardship and/or unforeseen circumstances outside the control of the individual member of the fund or dependents that may be concerned."*

As the chairperson of the London Ambulance Service Benevolent Fund I am continually faced with surprises and challenges, but with the support of the executive committee I have been able to continue to lead the fund in the same manner that it has been since it was created. On a personnel note I can thank the executive committee for their support and help throughout the year especially Tina Vince for all the work that she does in running the fund.

As we go forward into a new year I will seek to endeavour to support our members through their hardships and promote the Fund throughout the service and the benefits that we can give.

**Chairperson's responsibility in writing the report**

The chairperson of the London Ambulance Service Benevolent Fund is the responsible person for overseeing the efficient and effective management of the fund and under the constitution of the Fund is also required to report annually on the performance of the Fund during the previous 12 Months, including the current position, and any foreseen or possible changes that may affect our members during the year ahead. In keeping with the above it is my responsibility to submit a report in preparation for the Funds Annual General Meeting, which has traditionally



been fixed within our constitution to take place within the first Quarter of the year following the financial year being reported on.

As part of my responsibilities I am bound to provide a financial report on the fund covering the financial period, 1st April 2022 - 31st March 2023. This allows me to publish the Funds balance sheet within the prescribed time scale giving members an indication of the financial performance measured against the previous twelve month period. The full financial analysis will be discussed and ratified by the executive committee at our Annual General Meeting. The Annual General Meeting is due to take place within an approximate and predetermined period for each year. This can of course be delayed depending upon the amount of problems or normal difficulties that we regularly face.

The Annual General Meeting covers in its agenda various reports on our performance during the Funds previous financial year, (1st April to 31st March) plus any recommendations that may be required to maintain or improve the position or performance of the Fund.

The AGM will also consider the election or re-election of the management and executive committee as required under the constitution and Bye Laws of the Fund

The above preamble to the Chairman's report explains the chairman's responsibility, the reporting period and the management council and executive committee's re- election and the implementation of any recommendations from the AGM.

### **Executive Committee**

Over the last year we have elected 4 new committee members. This brings the total committee members to 10. That said I still believe that there are still some areas of the LAS where having a member of the fund on the committee would enhance the work of the fund and the support it can give.

The provision of support to our members in need is of a varying nature and sometimes demands immediate or urgent action and Tina Vince deals with all of this on a daily basis, usually at the time of the members greatest difficulty. Members that have dealt with Tina during their moments of crisis will witness to how they have been dealt with in a compassionate and committed way and were able to rely upon the Fund and the support offered in their time of greatest need. Tina Vince needs the support of the committee to approve loans and grants to help the members. In order to continue this we need to have enough Executive Committee Member to support Tina Vince on a daily basis and we need to plan for the future for when she retires.

Despite this Tina Vince has continued to deal with bereavements, severe accidents, marital problems, loss of accommodation, hardship, severe financial difficulties, and so many other varied problems that the average person would be at a loss to deal with, and for this I put on record my thanks to Tina for all that she does.

Looking forward I see the need to continue to look to expand the executive committee in to geographical areas that have no representation, and adding members, even as far as doubling the current numbers. Regretfully I write the same statement as I did last time that I as the chairperson have struggled at some points in the last year to keep on top of what is required of me as the chairperson and will seek to ensure that the following years are not the same.



Again i wish to place on record my thanks to the Executive Committee for their continual support and hard work that they do for the fund, so often behind the scenes that they are not noticed.

### **How did we perform in the year 2022/23**

#### **Financial**

This year we have stayed with the accountants we used last year so the financial report continues to look different to what we have been used to.

Having received the official financial report from the accountants. Year on year it is hard to ascertain exactly how healthy the fund is, in 20-21 we made a deficit, whereas 21-22 we made a slight profit but last year we made a deficit of £41,401. This is due to having a number of members pass away whilst still in service and retirement grants are higher than the previous year. The unpredictability in members leaving makes it hard for me to predict how healthy the fund is.

On paper the fund still looks to be healthy at £585,321 but I feel that this still hides and underlying issue that the fund is in decline.

Once again we see a decrease in membership subscriptions which could be attributed to the high attrition rate with in the LAS. Whilst the new members of the LAS are unaware or do not see the point of the fund as they do not plan to be with the service long. The near capacity workforce that the service had a few years ago has changed and there are now numerous vacancies especially on front line. There is the need to continue to widely publicise the fund with the hope of attracting new members and increasing our membership subscriptions.

Constant changes in internal arrangements and budget constraints within the LAS continue to result in an increase in the amount of experienced members taking their retirement

One of the unique features of the fund is the ability to provide a 0% interest loan to its members who are experiencing hardships. This year the number of members that have come to the committee to request a loan has increased.

In general terms, despite the continued financial uncertainty within the UK we have continued to provide our members in need the support they need. Despite the Funds total reliance upon volunteers, once more during this last years our support team and the executive committee members have once again faced up to the challenge of additional requests for assistance whilst maintaining their normal integrity and efficient management of the fund.

As always the Executive Committee members face a period of uncertainty regarding any financial decisions that we may make. So much of how the Benevolent Fund progresses or in fact manages its affairs will probably be dependent upon the general financial situation throughout the UK. However you can rest assured that whatever the outcome our executive committee will remain on top of it and make the sensible decisions that they have always done.

#### **Website**

The web page continues to be the main source of information for our members, however as previously stated over the last year I have struggled to keep on top of ensuring the information is up to date. i will endeavour to do better over the next year



### **Convalescent lodge**

Over the last year we have continually sought to ensure that our convalescent lodge, that is based down on the south coast at Shorefields, is maintained to a high standard. The purpose of the lodge is to provide a place where members can relax and convalesce or recuperate. I and my executive committee members are of the opinion that when any member walks into the lodge they should instantly feel at home and be able to start to relax and as such it should be maintained to the highest standard. It appears as if there is always some small job that needs to be completed or some minor repairs that needs doing. Our thanks go to the Shorefields maintenance department for their continued support and help.

### **2023/24 The Year Ahead**

Over the next year the service will publish its 5 year strategy plan and once published we will see the effect this has on staff and the service. Previous years the service seems to continue to be in a transitional state, so with a structure in place hopefully things will calm down. Within the service and the wider NHS staff finances remain volatile with major saving required across the board.

The current financial situation of the country is worse with the cost of living rising and remains unpredictable and therefore it will be impossible once again to predict how the Benevolent Fund will perform and in particular how events within the LAS will affect or influence the management of our fund.

Looking back over the last year it appears as if the issues the country has had is beginning to affect our members and the overall state of the fund, however going forward I am sure this will change. Our biggest challenge and main contribution to how the fund will perform is the number of members within the fund, which seems to be on the decrease, However we now have managed to produce a powerpoint to be shown to all new recruits. The committee members continue to promote the fund to gain more members. The London ambulance service employ over 8000 staff yet only about 20% of these staff are in the fund. We will continue to have members going through various hardships and we will endeavour to support them where we can.

We continue to be resilient enough to keep the management of the fund on an even keel but concern for how long we can maintain this is required, one option would be to increase the subscription to £4 or £5 per a month.

What we do each year is to adopt a flexible approach to the way ahead in terms of additional benefits or projects that will enhance the support that our members currently enjoy. What we finally look to achieve during the coming year will be dependent upon the outcome of the Annual General Meeting, and the final financial report, but I have no doubt that our aims and objectives will be to continue to improve the provision of meaningful assistance to our members and the extremely good work already achieved and to build upon this for the future.

Every year we ask a number of questions?

Are we doing enough for our members?

Is there anything else we can do for our members?

Can we add to the fund to support our members better?

Is there anything else out there that provides better value for money?



I have once again looked in to these questions and can say and feel that we are doing all that we can for the fund and currently it provide great value for money. At present I am unaware of anything that we could add to the fund to support our members better but as with all funds I am willing to look at suggestions and put it to the vote.

### **Closing remarks**

Although this year has had its challenges, especially in terms of the fund and the number of members that are leaving, financial constraints and emotionally with what is going on in London and the world. The fund continues to be a constant support its members.

I wish to once again convey my thanks to each member of the executive committee for their hard work and dedication to ensure that the fund continues to exist. As stated previously I am looking to expand the executive committee in certain areas, and therefore if you feel that you have something to offer in terms of running the fund, then please contact me via email on [Andrew.Hall3@nhs.net](mailto:Andrew.Hall3@nhs.net)

May I also take the opportunity to remind them and you the fund members that,

**“The Fund is managed by the members for the members,”**

We are always seeking to introduce new projects or schemes that would benefit the members according to our constitution and By Laws. Therefore if you have any ideas then please let us know.

I also feel sure that you will all wish to join me in thanking each one for all they have done and will continue to do for us (the Fund) over the coming years.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Andrew Hall".

Chairperson

