

LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE BENEVOLENT FUND

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR THE PERIOD 1st April 2008 – 31st March 2009

Chairperson's Annual Report

31 March 2009

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.

As the current Chairperson it is my normal 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. **Last year our financial reporting period was extended and changed in order to match the financial tax year April 1st to March 31st and avoid any conflict with our corporate tax commitments each year.** This year my report covers the above 12 month financial period, which for the first time falls into line with our financial reporting responsibilities. This will now allow a full financial analysis to be published following an acceptance by the executive committee at our Annual General Meeting. As a result of this year's changes future AGM's should take place within an approximate and predetermined period each year. This can of course be delayed depending upon the amount of problems or normal difficulties that we regularly face.

The future Annual General Meeting's will cover an agenda that includes the 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.

How did we perform in 2008/9

Considering the nature of the Funds management, which is carried out by our volunteer members and the importance of the various tasks that they take responsibility for, I can only report the remarkable effort achieved in a particularly challenging year. 2008/9 has been an extremely challenging year for the executive committee because of the overall financial uncertainty within the Banking system in the UK. As guardians of the Fund the executive committee had to consider various reports regarding certain financial institutions and take action if necessary to protect any of the Funds assets or investments that may be at risk. I believe that by agreement and advice from our long term independent accountant all the necessary action was taken. Currently our financial position as advised by our accountant appears healthy, but we do need to keep a watching brief for any future fiscal changes that may have some effect upon our Fund. Despite of the current situation happening around us I am able once again to report that the Benevolent Fund continues to maintain its position within the service, offering assistance to members in a variety of ways, ranging from financial assistance, counseling, benefit payments, convalescence and recuperative facilities and advice.

2008/9 was once again a year of further achievements which this year in particular exceeded all expectations. This was set against a background of financial crisis which threatened to affect our record of fiscal guardianship of the fund. Therefore it was necessary to bring forward a planned improvement for the renewal of our existing convalescent & respite facility which would result in an increased asset investment, giving the fund part protection to our future financial position. This decision was not taken lightly and much debate and advice was considered by the executive committee including a visit to the location of our facility. It was however agreed that negotiations for the exchange of our existing facility to a new and upgraded facility should take place with the aim to conclude before the new season start in April 2009. Once again despite the difficulties that faced us and the ongoing financial uncertainties within the UK, our individual executive committee members, remained focused and committed to the aims of the Fund. Therefore I wish to convey my personal thanks to these dedicated volunteers, without them our fund could not function effectively.

Our Almoner and the service Staff Support Officer, Tina Vince has 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. The provision of support to our members in need is of a varying nature and sometimes demands immediate or urgent action and Tina 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 moment or 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.

Our convalescence and recuperative lodge facility at Milford-on-Sea Hampshire would now be beginning its **8th year** of full use for members suffering or recovering from a severe or debilitating illness. During 2008, we allocated all weeks but a few which proved to be most beneficial to the members or their dependents that were unfortunately in need of this service. Again all visitors were full of praise for the facility and our chosen site and I feel sure that this will continue even more so with our new facility coming on stream in April 2009

Last year I reported that the success of this project and the provision of this facility can only be described as an outstanding implementation and achievement for the Benevolent Fund and the members in most need. These words cannot reflect how well this project has served our members that by necessity used this facility and without exception benefited from their visit. To date approximately 205 visits by members in need have been made to this facility. It is now our priority task to ensure that our new facility continues to deliver the same success and more in the coming years.

2009 Diaries Yes, they arrived were delivered to each member on time and at this moment in time we intend to provide them for 2010.

Our Web Site WWW.benfund.info continues to provide information and easy publication of our quarterly Newsletter (including draw winners) and any special notices or newsletters at any time during the year. Also on the current projects page (what is this facility) we have published some initial picture of our new facility. This will be improved as we progress.

2009/10. The Year Ahead

Each year I try 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. Over the years I have become to realise that without a crystal ball or some insider knowledge some things will change and have an effect on the Fund, but others will have no effect. In fact this has always been the case and we have always been resilient enough to keep the management of the fund on an even keel.

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, 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.

Despite the planned changes and some of the unplanned changes to our financial year we have kept our information on track and our accountant is now in the later stages of producing our financial income and expenditure accounts. I have had discussions with our independent accountant and I can report that our financial situation remains healthy, allowing all our known financial commitments to be met, including corporation tax. This of course is very dependent upon the current fiscal position operating within the UK. The Financial report will be published during April/May, prior to this, years AGM.

Every year I remind our members that the Fund is managed by the members for the members.

So much so that this has become our byword or motto. However, the Fund could not exist without our volunteer members of the executive and management council, a task for which we are always seeking new volunteers and **if any of you wish to consider helping, give Tina or myself a call and we will give you details of what is required of you. You will be surprised how little is required of you.**

Finally, I am sorry for the repeats within my report, but as each year goes by it becomes more and more difficult to find the words that are adequate enough to express how I continue to experience the immense personal satisfaction in keeping the Benevolent Fund on track, introducing new projects or schemes and experiencing the reward of knowing how much good we can do for our members most in need. I also know this feeling is shared by every member of the executive committee and therefore I wish to convey my personal thanks to the Benevolent Fund team for the way they have carried out their responsibilities. I also feel sure that you will all wish to join me in thanking each one for all they have done for us over the years.

A .J. Garrett
Chairperson
London Ambulance Service Benevolent Fund