



Reporting Committee	Emergency Ambulance Services Committee
Chaired by	Chris Turner
Lead Executive Directors	Health Board Chief Executives
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Date of last meeting	6 December 2022

Summary of key matters including achievements and progress considered by the Committee and any related decisions made.

An electronic link to the papers considered by the EAS Joint Committee is provided via the following link:

<https://easc.nhs.wales/the-committee/meetings-and-papers/december-2022/>

The minutes of the EASC meeting held on 8 November were approved.

PERFORMANCE REPORT

In presenting the report, Stephen Harray gave an update on the current emergency ambulance performance and an overview of the range of actions and processes that had or would be implemented to support performance improvement. The report also presented information in line with the most recent publication(s) of the Ambulance Service Indicators.

NOTED that:

- the report presented a picture of a system that was under severe and sustained pressure. It was reported that ambulance performance was well below levels that the Committee would want delivered and the actions being taken to improve performance were included within the report. Members were reminded that a proposal had previously been approved by Committee to alter a number of dispatch codes and that the likely consequence was that an increase the number of red calls would be received. It was noted that the service had started to see this impact
- the current position with record numbers of handover delays at hospital sites across Wales. Most members had been present at the recent **Ministerial Summit that took place on 28 November**, with the aim of discussing ongoing concerns around ambulance handover delays that were causing harm to patients. It was noted that the Minister for Health and Social Services opened the Summit by outlining her concerns around handover delays and reminded those in attendance of their organisational commitments to reducing delays.
 - Examples of improvements were shared by Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, with key messages in relation to the organisational ownership of patients from the time they call 999 and take leadership for their care within the organisation. In addition, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board shared their experience of improving handover delays, following a focus on the 4-hour red line and further work was planned to further reduce delays.

Each health board provided an update on their handover improvement plans and commitments at the Summit

AGREED that:

the presentation by Walsall NHS Trust provided a helpful focus on areas of learning. It was proposed that further contact would be facilitated via the Chief Ambulance Services Commissioner rather than through a number of separate discussions and that this would be in line with the work in Goal 4 of the Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care Programme

NOTED that:

- **Fortnightly handover improvement plan meetings** continued to be helpful and constructive and ensured specific consideration of the agreed trajectories
- **Conveyance rates were reducing**, this impact must be considered in light of a reduction in attendance in response to escalation decisions; also that this reflected the increasing role of 'hear and treat' and the impact of recent investment in both staff and technology within the clinical support desk. Close relationships with NHS Wales 111 were also felt to be an important factor in reducing conveyance
- The '**hear and treat**' efficiency target of 10.2% of daily volume and that the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST) had set an internal target of 15% by the end of the calendar year, it was reported that 16% had been reported on some days. The impact of new video technology and staff use of the ECNS (Emergency Nurse Communication System) to support decision-making
- **The level of risk and harm to patients across the system was widely recognised and the additional need to protect ambulance resources out of area, particularly for rural areas at a distance from emergency departments**
- Actions making a significant impact across the system included use of alternative pathways and services other than conveyance to emergency departments where appropriate to do so, a focus on the effective use of falls services and strengthened liaison between health boards and WAST to ensure effective communication, handover and release, particularly against the four-hour trajectory
- Work continued in partnership with local authorities to increase community care capacity with in excess of 450 bed/bed equivalents extra reported to date. Members were in agreement that this was significant, however, this would not solve the problems across the system with further work required on longer term provision, including additional care packages and support for people leaving hospital.

The Chair summarised and noted the key messages of the Minister for Health and Social Services in her closing remarks including the need for organisational commitment to the agreed actions, a focus on fewer key actions and the sharing of the key actions already having an effect.

Members **RESOLVED** to:

- **NOTE** the Ambulance Services Indicators
- **NOTE** additional actions that the Committee could take to improve performance delivery of commissioned services
- **NOTE** the handover improvement Ministerial summit discussion and the specific requirements of organisations.

UPDATE ON PROGRESS RELATED TO THE SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL EMERGENCY MEDICAL RETRIEVAL AND TRANSFER SERVICE (EMRTS CYMRU) AND WALES AIR AMBULANCE CHARITY

The report provided Members with an overview of the progress made since the Committee meeting on 8 November 2022. At that meeting, the EASC Team was asked to progress on:

- clarifying the position regarding resource implications
- responding to the significant comments raised and views regarding the importance of response times
- understanding how the air and road response model works, recognizing that for urban and rural areas it would be different
- further work required regarding the impact of weather
- consideration of the data reference period to ensure that this is appropriate and not unintentionally biased
- understanding any seasonal variation
- improving the understanding of the options available, including to consider whether changing bases is necessary, identifying further options and understanding why options have been discounted
- working with health board colleagues to consider the modelling undertaken.

NOTED that:

- Given the above requirements and the challenges raised by Committee members and stakeholders and in order to avoid protracted discussions over the process, content and transparency of the original proposal, the EASC Team had undertaken to start the process of undertaking this analysis afresh.
- the scrutiny in key areas would continue. The report focused on a description of the current service provision and the historical activity that had been delivered, including an overview of four specific areas related to base activity, these were:
 - Geographical coverage
 - Rapid Response Vehicle Usage (RRV)
 - Utilisation
 - Unmet need.
- there were potential opportunities for service improvement to be explored. The utilisation of all resources was included and, as an example to amplify this issue, both Caernarfon and Welshpool bases were reported as having lower levels of utilisation than the bases in Dafen and Cardiff. It was understood that an element of this would be related to the rural position and lower population density in these areas but options to provide equitable services should be explored
- when combined with unmet need, this would demonstrate that the EMRT service could potentially do more within its existing resource if changes were implemented to increase utilisation and reduce unmet need.

AGREED that:

- there was a need to explore and maximise the additional activity that could be achieved from existing bases and also to explore how any options to reconfigure the service could reduce the number of patients who require a critical care response from EMRTS but currently do not receive one (unmet need).

NOTED that

- modelling and modelling outputs would be part of a robust evaluation process, not used as a sole determinant
- as per the request at the last meeting, activity data from 2022 and weather probability information had been integrated into the preparation for the modelling, and this in turn would support further scenario modelling
- outputs of modelling would be determined by the assumptions that would be placed upon the modelling scenarios and, in order to do this, an understanding of the constraints that should be applied to any development process would be required
- noted that the report EMRTS 24/7 Service Expansion Review (received at the EASC meeting on 13 November 2018) provided the constraints that were adopted as part of the work and it was suggested that a similar a set of constraints would be appropriate and helpful for this current review
- the investment objectives that were used as part of the original case for the establishment of the 24-hour EMRTS service and the weighting that was applied to these objectives to inform the decision-making process for the 24/7 expansion review. The investment objectives were:
 - Health Gain
 - Affordability
 - Clinical Skills and Sustainability
 - Equity
 - Value for Money.

The Committee was asked to consider that the initial engagement process with the public, individual health boards and the Wales Air Ambulance Charity Trust should explore the appropriateness of the constraints, investment objectives and weighting presented, as part of a robust option appraisal process to inform discussion once further modelling and analysis was complete.

Stephen Harray gave an overview of the engagement activity that had been undertaken by the EASC Team since the last EASC meeting which included:

- Activities undertaken with many stakeholders both face to face and virtually
- Ongoing collation of, and responses to, over 60 stakeholder comments and questions
- Circulation of the latest stakeholder Briefing Note 2
- Updates to Community Health Councils (CHCs) and confirmation of the agreed key principles of engagement
- Fortnightly meetings with health board engagement, communication and service change leads.

The report proposed that the EASC Team would need to work closely with health board engagement, communication and service change leads and with Community Health Council (CHCs) colleagues in the development and agreement of appropriate engagement materials including the engagement document and the stakeholder engagement timetable.

It was proposed that the formal public engagement process could commence in early January, subject to agreement of engagement materials by health boards and CHCs.

The proposed engagement would include two phases, these were:

Phase 1:

- Explain how the current service works
- Test the constraints, investment objectives and weightings

Six-Week Review

- Agree options to be modelled

Phase 2:

- Undertake the modelling and use to inform a robust option appraisal process
- Make a recommendation to EASC Members.

Members discussed:

- The importance of utilisation of resources and the need for a balance in terms of availability of resources against the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery (not over or underutilised)
- The need to explore reasonable utilisation levels considering population densities, urban vs rural locations etc
- EMRTS as a national service, not covering a geographical area like road-based ambulances
- The need to understand the current co-ordination and deployment process
- The need to review operating hours when looking at options to maximise additional activity that could be achieved from existing bases and the options to reconfigure
- The impact of the announcement of the preferred bidder for the new aircraft contract; it was confirmed that this process had been ongoing for sixteen months and that the only agreement in place was for four aircraft plus the back-up capability. Members noted that there had been no pre-determination on the number of or location of bases, this was pending the outcome of the EASC processes (engagement)
- The need for a range of engagement material, including the need for them to be bilingual and easy to understand
- the need to develop an effective engagement approach that asked the right questions and reached as many people as possible. It was agreed that this would need to be a collaborative effort with health boards and CHC colleagues and that local leads would be able to inform this, e.g. the positive Powys experience utilising drop-in sessions was noted
- The two phases of engagement proposed, including the review at six-weeks; Members supported this approach
- Questions had been raised by Swansea Bay University Health Board ahead of the meeting asking for additional clarification on the engagement process, the work with health boards and the community health councils and the need for Equality Impact Assessments
- The need for a pragmatic approach in terms of signing off the engagement materials, involving Engagement or Service Change Leads working with Board Secretaries. Members noted Gwenan Roberts would be the point of contact from the EASC Team
- Formal public engagement could commence 9 January if the required agreed documents were in place
- Consideration be given regarding short term support for the EASC Team.

The Chair confirmed that he would ensure the required assurance was in place ahead of undertaking Chair's Action (on behalf of the Committee) to commence the formal engagement process.

Members resolved to:

- **NOTE** the high-level overview provided and the variation in service delivery from the existing bases
- **AGREE** that the issues highlighted by this paper require further exploration and options appraisal process to deliver improvements
- **APPROVE** the service development constraints to be engaged upon
- **APPROVE** the EMRTS key investment objectives and weightings to be engaged upon
- **APPROVE** the commencement of a formal public engagement process as agreed
- **APPROVE** the use of the agreed constraints to inform subsequent modelling and development of options
- **APPROVE** the use of agreed EMRTS key investment objectives and weightings in the options appraisal process
- **APPROVE** Chair's action to commence the formal engagement process when documentation agreed.

Key risks and issues/matters of concern and any mitigating actions

- Red and amber performance
- Handover delays (and the development of handover improvement plans in HBs with trajectories) and the impact on WAST
- Structured approach relating to the engagement process for the EMRTS Service Review.

Matters requiring Board level consideration

- To acknowledge the significant risks for patients in relation to handover delays and the need for health boards to implement the local handover improvement plans and identified trajectories) for every emergency department against the 25% reduction on the minutes lost per arrival and no handover delays over 4 hours
- Opportunity for health boards to take part in the public engagement process related to the potential changes to EMRTS Cymru working in partnership with the Wales Air Ambulance Charity.

Forward Work Programme

Considered and agreed by the Committee.

Committee minutes submitted	Yes	✓	No	
Date of next meeting	17 January 2023			