



West Midlands Ambulance Service
University NHS Foundation Trust



MONTHLY Briefing

February 2024



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TRUST REMAINS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL IN THE COUNTRY

A new report from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) has shown that West Midlands Ambulance Service remains the best in the country... page 2



Also this month....Providing the Right Care to Patients; Another Difficult Month Caused by Handover Delays; Trust Launches New Anti-Racism Charter; Mental Health Vehicles Rolled Out and much more...

Trust us to care.

Top Stories.....

Trust Remains the Most Successful in Country

A new report from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) has shown that West Midlands Ambulance Service remains the best in the country. The CQC inspected the Trust last year and looked at two core services: urgent and emergency care and our emergency operations centres (EOC), as well as how well-led the Trust was overall. The report, which was published on 22nd February, rates the Trust as 'Good'.

- **Urgent and emergency care:** The overall rating has changed from outstanding to good, as have the ratings for being responsive and well-led. Effective has dropped from outstanding to requires improvement. It has again been rated good for being safe, and caring was again rated outstanding.
- **Emergency Operations Centres (EOC):** The overall rating has improved from good to outstanding, as has the rating for being effective. Well-led has again been re-rated as outstanding. It has again been rated good for being safe, caring and responsive.
- As well as the Trust's rating for being effective, responsive and well-led has changed from Outstanding to Good. It has again been rated good for being safe. It has been re-rated outstanding for being caring.

Charlotte Rudge, CQC Deputy Director of Operations in the Midlands, said: "We found leaders had the skills, knowledge and experience to run services well. However, ambulances were queuing for hours at A&E departments due to handover delays, which impacted on people's care and wellbeing. This resulted in longer response times, it also had a negative effect on staff, who were doing their best to provide safe care and treatment to people. The Trust was working hard to improve its culture, so people and staff could raise concerns without fear. WMAS had improved staff wellbeing and freedom to speak up guardian services. However, during the inspection, some staff told us they still felt unable to speak up and be listened to. In the Trust's two EOCs, the service was the best in the country for answering 999 calls. Also, staff understood the emotional impact the situation had on people's wellbeing and on those close to them, particularly when the service was experiencing delays. They were well trained and responded in a professional way to help people receive the care they needed."

Thank You to the workforce from the Chief Executive

Welcoming the news, Mr Marsh, said: "Like me, many staff will be disappointed that our rating has dropped from Outstanding to Good, given how hard they all work every single day, but I am delighted that the caring domain remains outstanding. I couldn't be happier that the inspectors have now rated our EOCs as outstanding; the only one in the country. It is pleasing that the inspectors noted the impact hospital handover delays have on our patients and our staff's wellbeing. Given this inspection happened at perhaps the most challenging time within the history of the NHS, there is much to be proud of. However, we do also note the comments about our culture. We are working hard to ensure staff feel able to speak up and we all treat our colleagues with the respect they deserve. Our staff have helped us over the last 18 months to create a new cultural statement, we have launched our sexual safety charter and we continue to develop of our six staff networks and the substantial increase in the health and wellbeing support available to you. Although we are making progress there is undoubtedly further work to be done."

Chairman Passes on Congratulations from the Board

Trust Chairman, Prof. Ian Cumming, said: "It makes me so very proud that the care we provide remains outstanding despite everything that is happening in the NHS. The CQC saw a positive, patient centred culture within the Trust with hard working staff proud to work here and making a real difference to patients' lives. Compassion is a large part of our role and I am equally proud that the report notes how our staff support people who are distressed or overwhelmed in stressful situations. Quality and safety are key priorities for us; they are essential for running an effective ambulance service. I also want to note the positive statements the CQC made about the quality of the leadership within the Trust."

The View of Staffside

Joint Staffside Chair, Reena Farrington said: "We are obviously delighted to see EOC achieve an 'outstanding' rating but it is disappointing that the hard work of our operational staff is not being fully recognised by the outcome of the report. It is not their fault that they are stuck for hours on end outside A&E Departments, yet they are being penalised for that in the rating. Why should hard working, dedicated staff be penalised for something that is out of their control? We will continue to work with the Trust to improve the culture of the organisation and ensure all staff feel safe to speak out."

Top Stories.....

Providing the Right Care to Patients

Figures taken to the recent Trust Board meeting show that the Trust continues to do all it can to provide the most appropriate care to patients whilst also playing our part in reducing the pressure on our hospital colleagues. The figures show that year to date, just 48.9% of patients end up going to A&E, with 18.5% dealt with over the phone and 28.9% seen by clinicians and discharged with treatment, advice or potentially referring them to other services. Paramedic Practice & Patient Safety Director, Nick Henry, said: “The Trust continues to undertake significant work with the Clinical Navigator service in the Emergency Operation Centres (EOC) around the assessment of Category 3 and 4 incidents to see if they can receive care through alternative pathways that are more suitable to the patient. The introduction of the ‘Call Before Convey’ scheme for over 75-year-old patients is also working well with hundreds of patients each week going through the scheme. There is no question that staff in both EOC and on the road are working incredibly hard to ensure patient’s get the right care, for which I am very grateful.”

ICB	Hear & Treat	See & Treat	See & Convey	Conveyed to ED	Conveyed to Non-ED
Birmingham & Solihull	22.8%	27.8%	49.4%	45.2%	4.2%
Black Country	18.0%	28.1%	53.9%	51.4%	2.5%
Coventry & Warwickshire	18.4%	29.4%	52.2%	49.1%	3.1%
Herefordshire & Worcestershire	16.2%	27.4%	56.4%	53.2%	3.2%
Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin	17.5%	32.1%	50.3%	45.8%	4.5%
Staffordshire and Stoke	15.2%	30.3%	54.4%	49.0%	5.4%
Trust	18.5%	28.9%	52.7%	48.9%	3.8%

Another Difficult Month Caused by Handover Delays

Pretty much, whichever department our employees work in, handover delays will be having an impact on their role. It’s not just the staff who face hours outside A&E Departments or control room staff left with hundreds of outstanding cases on their dispatch queue or increasingly angry callers. It is Vehicle Preparation Operatives who are being asked to service more vehicles more quickly than ever before; mechanics who have less time to service ambulances; HR advisors dealing with health and wellbeing issues; patient safety staff having to investigate many more Serious Incidents; the toll goes on and on. In January, the Trust lost just under 35,000 hours of ambulance time, around one hundred 12-hour shifts every single day! It was the worst month since December 2022 and the eighth worst ever. Trust Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, said: “What has struck me since Christmas is the number of times I have heard about staff going the extra mile to help patients and each other. When the challenges are as great as they are, we all need to pull together and look out for each other. I thank each and every member of staff for all they are doing during these difficult times.”

Something Has to Change – We Can’t Carry On Like This

An extraordinary meeting of the Trust Board has taken a decision to seek up to an additional £20m pounds to break the log jam of hospital handover delays which has led to patient harm, hugely extended response times, late finishes and moral harm to staff. As mentioned earlier in the Briefing, despite the extreme pressures and current challenges, The Trust was rated ‘Good’ by the CQC, citing the hospital handover delays and the resulting inability to get to patients in a timely way the reason for the change to the rating. WMAS also received a Section 12 Improvement Notice which compels the Trust to improve response times. Trust Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, said: “We all know just how frustrated we are about handover delays. Although a huge amount of work has been taking place to find solutions, the Notice now places additional pressure on the whole of the NHS to find a solution. This year, we will lose in excess of 250,000 hours of ambulance time; time that crews could have been treating patients, never mind the tens of thousands of additional calls that EOC staff have had to take from patients and their loved ones asking where their ambulance is. We simply cannot carry on like this – we have to break the cycle.” To do this, the Trust is proposing to recruit around an additional 300 paramedics and increase the ambulance fleet by 20 over the coming year, over and above what had already been planned. The Trust will make a funding request to Commissioners ahead of final budget approvals. Doing so will mitigate the delays in responding to patients and allow staff to finish on time. Mr Marsh continued: “The last thing I want is any of that £20m – we wouldn’t need it if we were able to free up our ambulances. We are also developing a range of other options that will allow us to maximise the number of staff responding to patients. We must not allow handover delays to become the norm.”

Top Stories.....

Trust Launches New Anti-Racism Charter

West Midlands Ambulance Service is proud to have launched a Race Equality & Inclusion Charter for staff as it marked Race Equality Week in February. The Charter represents the Trust's commitment to Anti-Racism, striving towards inclusivity and maintaining a zero tolerance approach to racism and discrimination. It emphasises addressing racism and asks staff to speak up against it if encountered or observed within the organisation or during interactions with patients. As an extension of the Charter, a training package has been created that aims to increase awareness around the different forms of racial discrimination, how we can speak out against it and also the importance of understanding & valuing difference. Director of People, Carla Beechey said: "The Trust is committed to creating and maintaining a zero-tolerance approach to racism and discrimination. Sadly, we have seen cases of this internally, but where it has happened, we have taken immediate and robust action. Sadly however, too many of our staff have and continue to face racism as they go about their job, which we find deeply disappointing. Race and racism are not always well understood and therefore race is mistakenly and widely used to denote difference. Racism is very real and yet often we deny it affects us and our behaviours, which is something we are determined to change." The training will be available to all employees, students or volunteers and provides a structure for how we can work together to achieve a safe, inclusive and positive place to work. If you would like to watch the video with more information about the new charter you can do so [here](#).

Rollout of New MHRV Electric Vehicles

Our brand-new Mental Health Response Vehicles began operating at the end of last year and we're now rolling out the first vehicles built to a new national spec across England. Last month, the new EVs were deployed to Coventry, Shrewsbury, Stoke and Worcester Hubs, with a further two vehicles expected to arrive in the coming weeks. Since December, our Specialist Mental Health Paramedics have been providing enhanced care to patients and the addition of these new vehicles gives us the ability to assess, care for and, if needed, convey patients in a more therapeutic environment. Mental Health Response Vehicle Team Leader, Adrian McCorkell, says: "These vehicles have less obvious markings than other emergency ambulances and a less obvious blue light system which assists in reducing the distress and perceived stigma which can be caused by having emergency vehicles respond to this patient group. The fact that these vehicles are EVs also builds on the services commitment to reducing the environmental impact of our vehicles."



Trust to Invest in 110 New Vehicles

The Trust Board has approved a capital plan for 2024-25 which will see WMAS invest in no fewer than 110 new vehicles. As an organisation, we remain committed to having no frontline vehicle over five years old. There are a number of developments in the fleet over the coming months which will also see our 15 4x4 emergency ambulances replaced. In addition, 81 new Fiat emergency ambulances will be brought into service. As colleagues will be aware, the Trust has been operating a fully electric ambulance based on a Fiat chassis out of Erdington for the last three years. In 2024-25, a number of fully electric Ford ambulances will also be brought into the fleet. In addition to the above, ten new HART vehicles will begin operations as part of the national replacement programme and a new MERIT response vehicle will bring the total to 110. Director of Performance & Improvement, Nathan Hudson, said: "I am sure staff will welcome the significant investment the Trust is making in frontline vehicles to maintain the five year replacement programme. We know that the reliability of vehicles is paramount and the older vehicles get the less reliable and less comfortable they become for patients and staff." Head of Fleet and Facilities Management, Tony Page, added: "I would like to thank the staff who are involved in our vehicle design group for their continued work in how our vehicles are laid out. I know your colleagues will welcome the fact that frontline staff play an integral part in ensuring the ambulances work for staff." In the next three months the last of the 2023-24 vehicles will be delivered following manufacturing delays, which colleagues will be aware of from previous articles. A total of 85 new emergency ambulances and eight Operational Manager type cars will be delivered.

News.....

GoodSAM Pilot Extend By a Year

With over 400 incidents attended and two ROSCs in the first six months, the Trust's pilot of GoodSAM has certainly proved to be a success. Currently, 347 staff and a further 107 Community First Responders have signed up to the scheme to be responded to cardiac arrests in their area. Paramedic Practice & Patient Safety Director, Nick Henry, said: "This was a fantastic way to start our pilot with GoodSAM. It has been sufficiently successful that we have agreed to keep it going for at least the next year. With around eight activations every day, we now want to increase the number of staff and CFRs who take part in the scheme. We hope that many more will take the opportunity to download the app and be prepared to respond to carry out 'hands only CPR'.



Howzat For a Way to Promote CPR?

You may remember back in September 2022 the Trust launched a CPR awareness video with famous faces from the world of Rugby. The video, which you can view [here](#), was played at rugby grounds across the country, with a reach of 750,000. Well, work is now underway on a second video with stars from the world of cricket, which was recorded



at Edgbaston, the home of Warwickshire CCC. The second instalment of the Half-Time project, which was the idea of Community Response Manager, Andy Jaynes, was recorded on the Media Launch Day for the T20 season and was attended by CRM Cliff Medlicott, together with Community First Responders Steve Hart, Jon Essex and Simon Rhodes, all three of whom are once again giving their time for free to produce a video to the highest professional standard. With support from the ECB, the finished video, which will be ready to launch when the warmer weather and cricket season is upon us, will be played into the big screens at all 18 county grounds throughout the summer, at both domestic and England international matches. Cliff said: "The Rugby video was so well received it's fantastic that we've got the ECB on board to produce a cricket based version. Thanks to Steve, Jon and Simon for giving their time and expertise for free and for helping to promote the important message of how to do CPR.

18 SALS Advisors Complete their Training

The Staff Advice and Liaison Service has welcomed 18 new advisors into their team. They have completed their intense two-day training to become Peer Support Advisors. They will join the on call team that receive calls through our 24/7 SALS Advice line and offer local support to staff members in their time of need, offering information or advice as well as a confidential listening ear. SALS also offers immediate post incident defusing in support of managers undertaking this role. They can also provide structured Social, Emotional, Educational Support meetings for staff involved as a group in a critical incident a few days later.



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News.....

Women's Health Coffee Morning with the WMAS Women's Network

Last month, the WMAS Women's Network held a Coffee Morning to discuss Women's Health topics such as menopause and women's health to help broaden the conversation surrounding these subjects. The morning included a Q&A with guest speakers: GP, Dr Aaliya Goyal and Trust Menopause Champion, Lucy Butler. Those in attendance were able to donate period products to add to the supplies for the free sanitary containers at their local hub. Network Vice Chair, Sonia Bhatti said: "It was fantastic to get everyone together within a safe and supportive environment to discuss Women's Health topics and how we can all widen our understanding of women's health!"



HWB Champions have their first meeting of 2024

Recently, our Health and Wellbeing Champions from across the Trust met for the first time in 2024 for an online session led by Health and Wellbeing Manager, Manjeet Malhi. The day gave the champions a closer look at what is being planned for the year, as well as giving them an opportunity to share what has been going on at their hubs and Trust sites. Manjeet said: "It was a great session which allowed champions to share and discuss the work each champion has been doing including some fantastic wellbeing boards, including this one from Lucy Foulkes from Bromsgrove Hub, and 'time to talk' sessions that have been taken place at Trust sites. I would personally like to thank all the champions for what they do and their hard work."



Lee's Incredible 10-Stone Slimming World Journey

It's hard to believe that someone could lose the equivalent of a whole other person in weight, right? Well, that's exactly what Dudley Paramedic Lee Farley did, losing an impressive 10-stone since starting his Slimming World journey just over two years ago. He used Slimming World vouchers available through the Trust Health and Wellbeing website. In July 2023, Lee made it to the finals of Slimming World's, Man of the Year competition, after losing eight-stone, but he's gone on to reach his new target. Lee said: "When I made it to the finals I was bombarded with questions and queries from colleagues about how I'd done it, so sign posted them to the vouchers. If you've ever wondered what 10-stone might look like, take a look at this photo of me and my friend Vanessa! I've lost the equivalent of an entire person in weight. I feel great; I'm so much healthier and fitter and do regular exercise, which is good for the mind and body. After years of yo-yo dieting I never thought I would get anywhere near my current weight." Trust Health and Wellbeing Manager, Manjeet Malhi, added: "Lee is such an inspiration, he has worked extraordinarily hard and not given up and we are all so proud of him. I too joined Slimming World last year as I found the stories inspirational; for me it's about educating yourself on healthy eating and foods you can / can't eat, which I wasn't aware of. I've also lost over a stone, which has made me feel so good and increased my self-confidence. Since Lee's award nomination, more than 60 staff have utilised the vouchers, proving what an inspiration he is to many of us."



Becoming a Dyslexia Friendly Workplace

The Trust has signed a pledge with the British Dyslexia Association to work towards being a 'dyslexia friendly employer'. Head of HR, Lucy Mackcracken, who is herself dyslexic, said: "We have met the Bronze Level quality mark and will be working towards the silver mark over the next 12 months. We intend to set up a staff working group as part of our progress towards the Silver Mark."



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News.....

Thank You and Goodbye Wendy...

Last month's Trust Board meeting marked the end of an era as Non-Executive Director, Wendy Farrington-Chadd, said goodbye after her last meeting in the role. Wendy has served on the Trust Board for seven years, most recently as Vice Chair and Chair of the Audit Committee. Wendy said: "I had never thought of joining the service until I became a patient. I was hugely impressed by the care and compassion exhibited by the crew who helped me. During my time with the Trust the quality of the care provided by staff has remained something that I admire hugely. I would like to thank staff for all that they do and wish them all the very best over the coming years." Wendy is leaving after taking up the role of Chief Executive of the Community Health Partnership. Trust Chairman, Prof. Ian Cumming, added: "Wendy has made a remarkable contribution to the Trust over many years and we are very sorry to see her go. She always took a keen interest in staff and constantly reinforced the importance of doing the right thing for patients no matter how difficult it was." Wendy will be replaced as Vice Chair by Prof. Alex Hopkins.



...And Welcome Suzanne

The Trust is delighted to announce the appointment of Suzanne Banks CBE as the Trust's new Non-Executive Director. She will join the Trust on 1st April. Suzanne retired as Chief Nurse at Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in 2019 following a successful career of 38 years. She worked as a general nurse, children's nurse and health visitor and gained her MBA at Keele University. She currently works at a national level in the NHS supporting menopause care in the workplace and within Trusts providing coaching and leadership development for senior nurses. She is passionate about ensuring the most vulnerable of our community have care provided for them in the most accessible way possible. As a Chief Nurse, she led a programme of work within Nottinghamshire supporting the homeless within a local soup kitchen. Suzanne was awarded a CBE for services to nursing in the NHS in the Queen's Birthday Honours list in 2020. She lives on the Shropshire / Staffordshire border with her husband and has two daughters. In her spare time, she enjoys yoga, the gym, walking, needle-craft and going to ger local book clubs. She said: "I'm really looking forward to joining the WMAS Board and meeting and hearing from colleagues across the organisation."



40 Years Service and Still Smiling

A career in the ambulance service is no mean feat and sticking it out for four decades is even more of an incredible achievement so huge congratulations are in order for Dave Munday who has been presented with his 25, 30 and 35 years' service awards! Currently an Emergency Care Practitioner out of Worcester Hub, it's been a varied journey for Dave. He started in 1983 with Wiltshire Ambulance Service on the Patient Transport Service, moving rapidly on to frontline as a Technician and qualified as a Paramedic in 1990. Since then, he's had some extraordinary experiences including attending the Hungerford shootings in 1991, delivering an amazing 18 babies and working as a Community Paramedic from a GP surgery in Royal Wootton Bassett in 2001; all before joining us at Team WMAS in 2009. Worcester Senior Operations Manager, Liz Parkes, says: "Dave has had a varied and interesting career serving the public and providing care to those in need. I am very grateful for his commitment and length of service and I do hope that his patients realise how lucky they have been to have him look after them. Congratulations, Dave!"



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WMAS Round-Up

January 2024: The Numbers



Welcome to the latest monthly stats round-up where we look at performance and demand across the 999 emergency service, control rooms and the Trust's Patient Transport Service.

999 Emergency Service



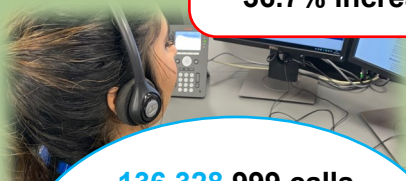
140,466 emergency contacts (inc. all 999 calls, duplicates, events & 111 referrals). **34.2%** increase on Feb '23

80,758 unique incidents
Average of 2,785 a day
10% increase on Feb '23

22,766 hours lost due to regional hospital handover delays - **75.7%** increase on Feb '23

Hear & Treat
12,757 patients treated over the phone
36.7% increase on Feb '23

See & Convey
44,238 patients conveyed for further treatment
6.8% increase on Feb '23



136,328 999 calls received compared to 101,036, an increase of **34.9%** on Feb '23

0 mins 02 seconds, the mean answering time compared to 0.07 in Feb '23

79.2% of addresses matched in less than 60 seconds, compared to 80.8% in Feb '23

Patient Transport Service



66,095 journeys undertaken across all contracts
0.1% increase on Feb '23

32,941 Renal journeys (including aborted)
1.2% increase on Feb '23

3,465 aborted journeys
1.4% decrease on Feb '23