



**West Midlands Ambulance Service**  
University NHS Foundation Trust



# MONTHLY Briefing

January 2024



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## A BUSY START TO 2024

This year saw a 13% increase of calls in comparison to last year, as the UK rang in the New Year...page 2



Also this month....Over 500 Apply For Student Paramedic Programme; Positive Feedback Following Launch of Call Before You Convey; High Praise for Commercial Call Centre Team and much more...

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## Top Stories.....

### It Was a Busy Start to 2024

It proved to be a busy start to 2024 for the Trust with a near 13% increase in call numbers compared to last year. From 6.00pm on the 31st until 6.00am on the 1st, call assessors in Stafford and Brierley Hill took no fewer than 2,776 calls from the West Midlands, up from 2,461 the previous year. Over the two days (31st December and 1st January), the Trust took a total of 10,481 calls, up from 9,055, an almost 16% increase on the previous year. Despite it being a time to celebrate for many, the biggest rises in call types were all medical, with big rises in calls for chest pain, sick, breathing problems and abdominal pain. Trust Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, said: "A massive thank you to the hundreds of staff and volunteers who worked



over the whole festive period. I know many of them gave up time with their family and friends to work additional shifts, which is very much appreciated by the service but also the public who they helped. It was a real team effort from those in the control rooms but those on the road and the staff who support these colleagues in areas such as vehicle preparation, mechanics, stores, distribution and IT; it is a real team effort."

### A Chance to Make Real Change

**A Message from Chair and Chief Executive:** The start of the year provides us with an opportunity to look at what we might hope to achieve in the coming 12 months. It is also the chance to see what we did last year and build on the areas that we believe will make a real difference, not just for our patients, but as importantly, for our staff. There is no question that the last year has been tough with continued hospital handover delays leading to late finishes and missed meal breaks. But 2023 also saw us launch our new cultural statement, which our staff helped us create and which sets out the sort of organisation that we want to be part of. Last year, we made real progress in embedding that culture: we saw our staff networks grow and expand in number. We think particularly of the extraordinary work that we completed around the launch of the new student network. Bringing together students who work for us with those who undertake placements with us will allow us to develop our organisation with colleagues right at the beginning of their journeys. While no-one thinks we are the finished article, we firmly believe that we are making progress. However, we all need to continue that journey together so that we can make this the sort of Trust that we all want it to be: inclusive, supportive and a place people want to work and develop their careers and we thank our staff for wanting to help us achieve that as well.



Prof. Ian Cumming  
Chairman

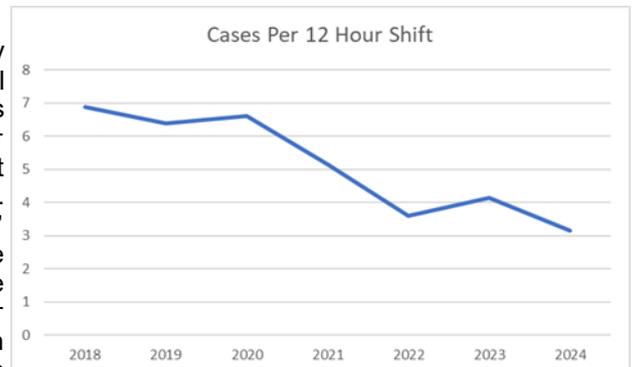
Anthony Marsh  
Chief Executive

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## Top Stories.....

### Delays Make It Harder to Help Patients

New data shows the continued downward trend in how many cases crews are able to undertake as a result of the hospital handover delays. Last year was slightly less bad for delays compared to 2022, which meant that on average in a 12-hour shift, crews managed to get to just over four cases per shift, but that is still well down on the almost seven they did in 2018. Given the hugely difficult start to 2024, with the junior doctors' strike, it is no surprise that average job numbers per shift have fallen to a new low of just over three. Director of Performance & Improvement, Nathan Hudson, said: "The data speaks for itself; it is no wonder that we are struggling to get to patients in a timely manner when so much of a shift is spent outside hospital. This is just another way of showing just how challenging the situation is for staff in both our control rooms and on the road."



### Positive Feedback Following Launch of Call Before You Convey

Following its launch in December, the early feedback in relation to Call Before You Convey is that it has got off to a productive and positive start overall. Call Before You Convey has been introduced in a bid to try and help ease pressures on A&E Departments, with the knock-on effect hopefully being that more ambulance crews will get to have their mealbreaks and finish, on time. At a meeting with NHS England, and senior managers from Integrated Care Boards and healthcare providers across the region, positives discussed included:

- Good partnership working and strong relationships forming between WMAS and Community Teams
- Some ICBs using early data analysis to understand gaps in services and future commissioning
- More than 700 calls made in the first two weeks
- Ambulance crews sharing positive experiences linked to patient outcomes
- ICBs being driven to keep a focus on the initiative

In addition to that, to help support the initiative and help staff understand the requirements fully, qualified alternative duties staff have been deployed into the Trust's Emergency Operations Centres and are assisting crews with call before you convey criteria and contact details on a live basis. Understandably, there will also be areas for learning with any initiative, with one such being that crews are reminded that patients requiring life-threatening or emergency/immediate treatment do not require a call to the community team. Paramedic Practice and Patient Safety Director, Nick Henry, said: "It's really pleasing to see such positive feedback at the start of this new scheme, which we all hope will have a major benefit to help ease pressure at hospitals. A big thank you to everyone for the part you have played in making it a success so far."

### Over 500 Apply for Student Paramedic Programme

Over 500 people have applied for the Trust's student paramedic programme, including many from within the Trust who are looking to develop their career. In total, 514 people applied over the Christmas and New Year period. The Trust plans to recruit a total of 424 student paramedics across the region during 2024-25. The new staff along with those who come to the Trust via direct university courses will help to further bolster the Trust's front-line staffing. WMAS Recruitment Manager, Louise Jones, said: "We are obviously delighted that so many people have applied particularly those who are changing jobs within the Trust. We've had a wide range of people including some in Patient Transport Services, Emergency Operations Centres and Vehicle Preparation Operatives apply and we look forward to hopefully seeing lots of them starting their training courses and being out on the road as soon as possible."



## Top Stories.....

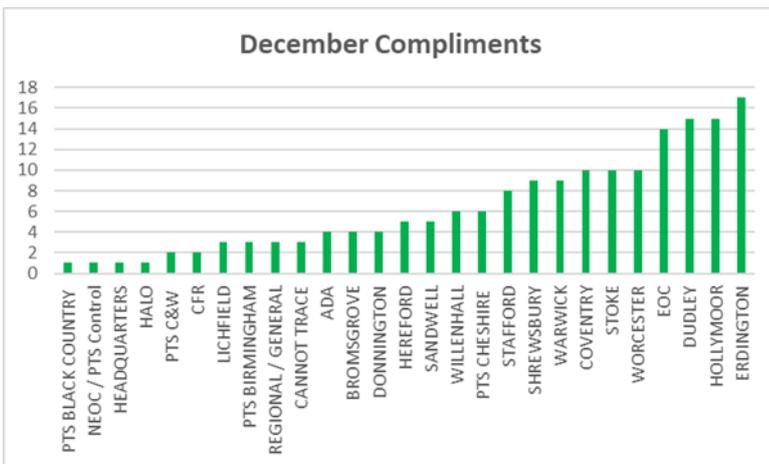
### Increased Enhanced Care Team Availability

Many members of the Trust's operational staff will have attended cases where patients have benefited from the assistance of critical care paramedics (CCPs) or doctors. Senior Operations Manager for MERIT & Enhanced Care, Jim Hancox, said: "Enhanced Care Teams (ECTs) offer support to ambulance staff, working collaboratively to ensure the best possible outcome for patients. As we start 2024, a number of changes are being implemented which will enhance the help available to crews responding to patients. We are fortunate to have the support of a number of charities who can provide additional interventions for patients. As well as the MERIT team, the Trust will operate a CCP-led RRV 12 hours a day. Midlands Air Ambulance is also changing the way it deploys its critical care cars which will now work overnight, all of which will help us to ensure we're providing the very best level of patient care we can, across the region." This is in addition to the availability of the West Midlands CARE Team and the Trust's other active BASICS responders such as MARS and North Staffs BASICS.



### Over 170 Compliments Despite the Challenges

Despite December seeing the worst hospital handover delays of 2023 and resulting increases in response times,



171 members of the public, patients and family members still took the time to contact the Trust to say 'thank you'. For some it was the care exhibited by staff, for others it was a heartfelt thanks for saving a loved one's life. Each message had its own story where colleagues within WMAS had made a difference to a patient and their loved ones and friends. Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, said: "Every time I see the compliments, I am struck by the difference our staff all make to the lives of strangers. Particularly at Christmas when we think more about family and friends, seeing that their actions meant some patients got to spend time with their loved ones when they might otherwise not have been able to fills me with pride; pride that their expertise, care and compassion has made such a difference. Thank you everyone for all you do to help our patients."

### Call Assessors Extraordinary Efforts

Despite December seeing the worst month of 2023 for hospital handover delays, which results in many ring backs from worried members of the public, the performance of the call assessing staff in Stafford and Brierley Hill remained amongst the best in the country. In total, staff took 143,730 emergency calls, including almost 25,000 for other services. Out of the 23,461 calls that took over two minutes to answer nationally, just 378 were in the West Midlands. Integrated Emergency and Urgent Care Director, Jeremy Brown, said: "We remain one of the best ambulance service in the country for speed of answering calls. When you consider how many calls we are picking up for other services in addition to our own, it is an extraordinary performance from the team. I am immensely proud of them as they keep performing despite the pressures that we face."

Trust	WMAS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
December	378	1,857	1,779	11,134	824	383	2,837	3,477	427	365
YTD	1,017	6,818	12,892	50,191	7,748	1,942	33,565	46,843	3,417	15,775

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## News.....

### High Praise for Commercial Call Centre Team

You are probably aware of an increase in measles cases across the region, and potentially the subsequent increased media attention that has come with it. As a result, people are understandably not taking chances if they have concerns, which has led to a significant increase in calls to our Commercial Call Centre team who are based at Tollgate in Stafford. Such has been their impressive work that the Trust received an email last month from the UK Health Security Agency, thanking them for their work. Cassie Gregory, the Principle Health Protection Nurse, said: "A big thank you from the UKHSA to the team for supporting us during the current measles incident, everyone has been super helpful." Non-Emergency Operations Call Centre Manager, Rebecca Parker-Williams, said: "It is nice to see the hard work of our staff has been noted elsewhere. I would like to add my own personal thanks to everyone in the Commercial Call Centre team for their continued hard work and dedication, over what has been a very busy time."

### National Mobilisation Application Roll Out Begins

One of the biggest changes to ambulance design is set to be rolled out across the Trust. After around 20 years of using the Terrafix MDT, the Trust is starting to introduce the new National Mobilisation Application (NMA). The change is being introduced across all three blue light services to ensure services stay within Road Traffic



legislation. It follows research into a number of blue light fatal crashes where distraction was found to be one of the biggest contributory causes. Under NMA, once the vehicle is moving at 7mph, the display screen will only show the sat nav. Additional information which was previously sent to the MDT will now be displayed on the attendant's iPad. The national programme was tested in North East and Yorkshire services and is now in use at six other Trusts. This is a significant change but is designed to save lives. We will be fitting this to around 560 Trust vehicles over the next six months starting with three ambulances at Lichfield and the new Mental Health Response Vehicles. NMA is different as it uses voice activation in a lot of situations but has so far been well received by ambulance staff. Whilst the software is different, many of the functions will be familiar to staff. One change will be to the navigation system which will use Ordnance Survey based mapping which goes down to property level and mirrors that used in EOC; in addition, it will be updated every quarter. Once our pilot has been completed at the end of February, we will move round the hubs fitting the system to all ambulances, Operational Manager, MERIT and Hazardous Area Response Team vehicles.

### Trust Thanked for Babbs Mill Response

The Mayor of Solihull, Councillor Diana Holl-Allen, hosted members of Trust staff towards the end of January, to thank the service for the response provided to the tragic incident at Babbs Mill Lake in December 2022, when four young boys lost their lives after falling into a frozen lake. Each emergency service has been hosted separately by the Mayor to say thank you for their efforts in trying to save the boys, with a special award, in recognition of their brave actions, being presented on each occasion. Tactical Incident Commander, Cameron McVittie, who attended the incident and was on hand to received the award on behalf of the Trust, said: "We are very grateful for having the service's efforts recognised in this way for what was an extremely challenging incident for all involved. Our thoughts remain with the family, friends and everyone affected by sad death of the four boys on that tragic night."



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News.....

**IT Security Amongst the Best in the Country**

Whether it’s Malware, Phishing, Spoofing or a Trojan Horse, all present a real risk to the IT security of our Trust. We have all seen the impact cyber security breaches can have on businesses, so it is essential that we are all aware of the dangers and do all we can to reduce the risk. Running parallel to that, the IT and Digital team have been working behind the scenes to introduce security updates. NHS England monitors all NHS Trusts for the vulnerability of Windows computers; in October, WMAS had the highest score of any NHS organisation with over 1000 devices! Director of Operational Support Services, Craig Cooke, said: “This is a fantastic achievement and follows a huge effort by the IM&T Department to update and upgrade computers within the organisation. It really demonstrates their hard work to provide the best defences against cyber and IT security breaches.” This year, over 80% of the Trust’s computers have been upgraded to Windows 11, which has enhanced security and improved the user’s experience. Head of IM&T, Phil Collins, added: “We recognise that patching computers can be annoying but we do it to protect our systems against malicious attacks. However, irrespective of the actions of IT, user discipline remains vital.”

**New Council of Governors Induction**

As a Foundation Trust, our Governors play a vital part in the governance of the Trust. They are made up of staff, public and appointed members who represent the staff and population of the West Midlands. They appoint the Non-Executives and Chairman as well as contribute to key decision making. The Trust recently held elections for all of the Governor positions. A number of staff positions were uncontested but the public votes were all used to decide on those positions. Last month, the Chair, Chief Executive, Trust Secretary and Governor and Membership Engagement Officer welcomed both the seven newly appointment governors as well as the 10 re-appointed to the Trust. They were given an overview of their role, the support system in place and their duties as governors and how they can engage with the community, staff and patients. They also met Non Executive, Julie Jasper and Vivek Khashu, Strategy and Engagement Director before undertaking a tour of the control room and dispatch. The governors started their term on the 1st January 2024 for a period of three years.

Staff Governors	Non-Emergency: Inderpal Sidhu Emergency & Urgent: Sarah Lawson and John Auerbach Support Staff: Matt Brown Emergency Operations Centres: Duncan Spencer
Public Governors	Staffordshire: Eileen Cox and Robin Cooke Birmingham: Peter Brookes and Khalid Ali Black Country: Anthony Bradley and David Murray C&W: John Davies and Brian Murray West Mercia: Roy Aldcroft and Ian Walker
Appointed Governors	CFR Regional Forum: Dave Fitton Local Authority: Cllr Ed Lawrence

**999 On the Frontline Moves to Channel 4**

The skills, care and compassion of WMAS staff are set to be viewed by an even wider audience with news that ‘999 On the Frontline’ has moved to Channel 4. The first nine series were shown on the sister channel More 4, but the programme’s success means that commissioners feel it needs to be shown to a wider audience. The first five episodes of Series 10 are being broadcast on Channel 4 on Tuesday nights at 8pm, having started on 30<sup>th</sup> January. The remaining five will be broadcast on the channel later in the year. This series was filmed following crews from Stoke, Stafford and Willenhall. Executive Producer, Claire Simpson from Curve Media, said: “It is a real testament to the quality of the series that Channel 4 are showing it at 8.00pm, a prime viewing time. However, the reality is that we couldn’t make it without the amazing staff within WMAS. A huge thank you to the staff who let us film them but also the managers who facilitate it; we couldn’t do it without them all.” Communications Director, Murray MacGregor, said: “What is so notable is that the programmes show the full range of cases that crews attend. Curve are just as interested in the cases where patients are left at home or referred to an alternative pathway as the big crash or serious injury or illness, allowing the public to see just what a good job staff do.”

## News.....

### Paramedic Zoe makes WMAS proud!

Clinical Validation Team Paramedic, Zoe McIntosh, took on the Gladiators in the second episode of the new BBC One series. Zoe missed out on her place in the next round, but only at the last hurdle (literally) when her and her opponent took on the travelator! After her experience in the spotlight, Zoe said: "The reviews and support from people since the show aired have been amazing! I've had so many messages from people at WMAS and people congratulating me on shift this week. It's been great to see videos of colleague's children and grandchildren shouting my name and cheering me on, whilst watching the show. The show got a staggering 8.1millions viewers which is incredible and 2million more viewers than the first episode of the series the week before! It's been very exciting and overwhelming".



### Chris, Dan and Monet Bid Farewell to EOC

Three popular members of the Emergency Operations Centre bid farewell to their colleagues over Christmas, but for some very different reasons. Call Assessor, Chris Mason, was the first to hang up her headset on December 21<sup>st</sup> as she retired, having completed an incredible 36-years of service for the Trust. Chris' working life with ambulance service began at Stone Road before joining all of her other colleagues when the move to Tollgate took place. In retirement, Chris plans to carry on 'fixing up' her house and spending more time with her son. There was a second departure at Tollgate on Boxing Day as Monet Johnson completed her final shift before leaving to become a paramedic. Monet has regularly acted up as a call assessor supervisor and will be greatly missed by all of her colleagues on Team 2. Good luck to Chris and Monet on their futures. Call Assessor from Navigation Point, Daniel Rundle, is the third to depart and will also be swapping his headset for some blue lights as he embarks on training as a Student Paramedic, following in his Mum, Paramedic Karen Rundles footsteps!



### Dudley CFRs Meet with Lynne Baird

Some of our Community First Responders in Dudley met with Lynne Baird as part of the Daniel Baird Foundation Charity last month. As many of you will know, Lynne lost her son, Daniel, to knife crime in Birmingham and has been campaigning for life-saving bleed kits to be rolled out across Britain. The team got together and will be incorporating bleed control training in their CPR Community training initiative going forward, which is great news! Paramedic Practice & Patient Safety Director, Nick Henry, said: "The idea behind the bleed control kits is to buy the first vital minutes before ambulance staff can reach the scene and so, with CFRs sometimes being first on scene, it's really important for them to be fully trained in using them. The reality is that, in situations where a patient has been stabbed, shot or even suffered a catastrophic bleed from a road traffic collision, early action could make the difference."



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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



**149,444** emergency contacts (inc. all 999 calls, duplicates, events & 111 referrals). **37.1% increase** on Jan '23

**86,111** unique incidents  
Average of 2,777 a day  
**8.6% increase** on Jan '23

**41,923** hours lost due to regional hospital handover delays - **81.1% increase** on Jan '23

**Hear & Treat**  
**15,133** patients treated over the phone  
**58.9% increase** on Jan '23

**See & Convey**  
**46,453** patients conveyed for further treatment  
**4.4% increase** on Jan '23



**145,009** 999 calls received compared to 105,238, an **increase of 37.7%** on Jan '23

**0 mins 01 seconds**, the mean answering time compared to 0.04 in Jan '23

**79.9%** of addresses matched in less than 60 seconds, compared to 81.4% in Jan '23

### Patient Transport Service



**67,896** journeys undertaken across all contracts  
**4.2% decrease** on Jan '23

**34,423** Renal journeys (including aborted)  
**2.7% decrease** on Jan '23

**3,775** aborted journeys  
**1.5% decrease** on Jan '23