



West Midlands Ambulance Service
University NHS Foundation Trust



MONTHLY Briefing

January 2023



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BREW MONDAY BEATS THE BLUES

Monday 16th January saw many hubs across the region take part in #BrewMonday, a campaign by the Samaritans to encourage people to reach out with one another on what is often called the 'most difficult day of the year'...more on page 6



Also this month....Hospital Handover Delays Reach New Depths; Trust Steps Up Pressure to Find Solutions; Skill Mix Remains Strong; Further Strike is Taken and much more...

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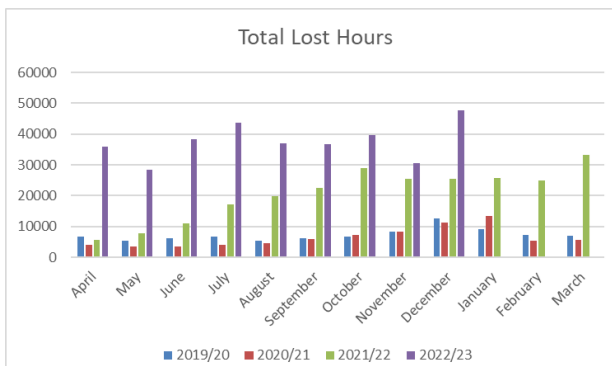
Top Stories.....

Hospital Handover Delays Reach New Depths

For Trust staff who work in our control rooms and out on the road, 2022 ended on a disappointing note as hospital handover delays reached new depths. After a relatively positive start to the month, the delays got steadily worse with December setting several new records:

- The worst month ever for lost hours: 47,635 hours lost, up from the 43,759 in July
- First time more than 10,000 patients in a month waited over an hour to be handed over
- Two new records set for longest waits: 32 hours 15 mins and then 32 hours 57 minutes

The delays were 87% worse than 2021 and almost four times as bad as 2019, pre COVID. On average the Trust lost more than 1,500 hours per day, the equivalent of losing 128 twelve hours shifts every single day.



Trust Steps Up Pressure to Find Solutions

With the situation getting steadily worse, the Trust has been stepping up its pressure to find solutions to the issue of hospital handover delays. Over the festive period, at the start of an evening shift, no fewer than 70 ambulances were deployed straight to hospital so that crews who were already past the end of their shift could get home to their loved ones. Trust Medical Director, Dr Alison Walker, said: "It was absolutely the right thing to do to send those ambulances because some of those crews were up to three hours late finishing on top of a 12-hour shift. However, as we were holding dozens of category 2 calls at the time, it undoubtedly impacted on patients



who had already waited much longer than any of us would want. We are acutely aware of the huge impact these delays are having on the mental health of staff and we will not rest until we have got progress. We are actively looking at solutions being used elsewhere in the country and seeing whether we can bring them to this region. As a Trust, we are in a daily dialogue with the region, ICBs and individual Trusts to find solutions to what is an unacceptable situation."

Huge Increase in Call Numbers

The Trust answered a staggering 157,326 emergency calls during December, the largest number ever recorded in a month. The sharp increase came as a result of the worst month ever for hospital handover delays resulting in long waits for ambulances and multiple ringbacks from worried patients and their loved ones. Through the month, more than 20% of calls were duplicates and on 19th December that peaked at 28.2% of all phone calls. The Trust also continued to offer support to London Ambulance Service. Call answer performance was understandably impacted with a mean call answer of 23 seconds and 87 seconds at the 95th percentile. This is also reflected in the increase in number of over two-minute delays reported, with 2,001 during the month, staggeringly, the second lowest in the country. More positively, the number of address matches by the call assessors rose to 78.7%, the highest figure for five months. Integrated Emergency and Urgent Care & Performance Director, Jeremy Brown, said: "Like road crews, December was probably the most challenged month we have ever seen. The fact that we were able to do as well as we did is down to the remarkable strength and character of all of the staff. While none of us ever want to see a month like that again, the staff should be proud of what they achieved, against the odds."

Top Stories.....

Staff Doing Their Bit to Support Patients and Acute Colleagues

New figures released at January's Trust Board meeting show just how hard staff are working to support patients and our acute Trust colleagues. In a month where the Trust lost almost 48,000 hours as a result of hospital handover delays, the data shows just how effective staff are in using appropriate alternative pathways. Across the region in December, almost 21% of calls were dealt with using advice only thanks to the work of call assessors and staff on the clinical validation team. In cases where crews attended patients, almost a third were treated at the scene and discharged. Director of Nursing, Mark Docherty, highlighted the remarkable statistic that only 45.4% of patients were taken to an Emergency Department and that the figure was as low as 42.2% in Birmingham and Solihull, one of the lowest in the country. Mark said: "The value of having a paramedic on every vehicle is clear to see; we have one of the lowest transport rates in the country and that is down to the clinical skill of staff and excellent use of the Directory Of Services so that we can use alternative pathways, when appropriate. Thank you to all staff for your efforts; you are making a real difference and keeping our patients safe."

ICS – December 2022 Data	Hear & Treat	See & Treat	See & Convey	Convey to ED	Convey to Non-ED
Birmingham & Solihull	25.5%	28.7%	45.7%	42.2%	3.5%
Black Country	17.3%	31.3%	51.4%	48.8%	2.6%
Coventry & Warwickshire	19.6%	30.8%	49.6%	46.5%	3.1%
Herefordshire & Worcestershire	17.8%	28.2%	54.0%	50.7%	3.3%
Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin	21.0%	31.8%	47.2%	42.7%	4.5%
Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent	22.1%	30.7%	47.2%	42.3%	4.9%
WMAS Total	20.9%	30.2%	49.0%	45.4%	3.5%

Skill Mix Remains Strong

For many years the Trust has endeavoured to have a paramedic on every vehicle as research has shown that this provides the best care for patients and is much more efficient as you rarely have to send more than one vehicle to each case. Emergency Service Operational Delivery Director, Nathan Hudson, said: "Thanks to a huge amount of effort by the Recruitment and Education & Training Teams, we have been able to steadily increase the numbers of ambulances with paramedics on board. No other service in the country gets this close to the level of crewing that we have been able to achieve over many years. As you can see from the figures below, which were presented to the Trust Board, the figures for December by hub are truly excellent with eight hubs achieving a 100% rate, with the rest not far behind. There is no question that this attention to detail is saving lives and giving our patients a much better service."

	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22					
Total	97.8%	97.6%	98.2%	98.8%	98.7%	99.6%	99.8%	99.8%	99.6%					
December 2022 – percentage of ambulance shifts with a paramedic on board														
Broms	Coventry	Don'ton	Dudley	Erdington	Hereford	Hol'more	Lichfield	Sand	Shrew	Stafford	Stoke	Warwick	Wil'hal	Worcs
100	100	100	99.6	99.1	100	99.8	99.8	98.1	100	100	100	99.8	100	100

Trust Explores More Advanced Specialist Roles

During the monthly All Staff Listening Event, staff heard the Trust's Chief Executive comment about the potential for expanding the number of advanced clinical roles within WMAS. Since the split with Midlands Air Ambulance, a group of 16 Critical Care Practitioners have been undertaking their training with many now fully qualified. This follows on from staff in the Clinical Validation Team in the Emergency Operations Centres (EOC) undertaking further study as part of their advanced role. A further area likely to see new opportunities is within mental health, with additional funding due to be forthcoming to the Trust. Head of Enhanced Care, Aidan Brown, said: "The Trust is definitely keen to see an expanded use of enhanced practitioners in specialist areas such as trauma through the MERIT scheme, mental health and within EOC. As with all such developments, funding streams need to be accessed, but we definitely see value in developing such programmes. We are at an early stage of plans but we know many staff would welcome the opportunity to enhance their skills within the ambulance service."

Top Stories.....

A Look Ahead to 2023 from the Chairman and Chief Executive

For many people, the end of 2022 won't be a sad passing, but will the new year be any better? The short answer is that there are no quick fixes, but that isn't to say that there isn't hope. The hospital handover delays that we have seen for many months are receiving renewed focus nationally. Additional money is now beginning to flow and there is a real focus on improving the Category 2 performance. As a Trust we are looking to recruit many more graduate and student paramedics to ensure we have enough staff to meet the current levels of demand. In addition, the Manchester Bomb Public Inquiry was clear that further investment is needed in the ambulance sector so that there can be a better response should such an attack happen again. As a Trust we remain committed to ensuring all staff get mandatory updates; technician to paramedic training continues and we will look for any existing technicians who want to, and are able, to take their skills to the next level. We are acutely aware that we want to support staff who have concerns about the organisation or individuals within it. It is one of the reasons we have a variety of ways open to colleagues to do so. However, we are in the process of rolling out a series of developments for the Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) programme which we hope will ensure staff feel confident to raise matters. As we mentioned in our Christmas message, the support the Trust provides to staff will remain a key focus for this year with additional measures being put in place. While there is no question the next 12 months will not be easy, we feel confident that we will see changes coming which will help staff individually and the service as a whole. Prof. Ian Cumming (Chairman) and Anthony Marsh (Chief Executive).

Board Pays Tribute to Staff

Despite probably the most difficult year on record, the number of compliments received by the Trust has shown a significant increase. Presenting the figures to the Trust Board, Director of Nursing, Mark Docherty, said: "None of our staff come to work to get letters of thanks, but we all appreciate it when someone who is having possibly the worst day of their life takes the time to contact the Trust and pass on their thanks. When you consider just how difficult it has been with long hospital handover delays, response times reaching times we could never previously imagined, it is notable that more people than ever are recognising the work that they do." Trust Chairman, Prof. Ian Cumming, added: "It really does show just how hard our staff work to help people despite the challenges we face. Such a tremendous achievement deserves recognition by the Trust Board and I know I speak on behalf of us all when I say 'thank you' to each and every one of them, no matter where they work within the organisation as without their efforts we would not have seen such a rise in compliments."



Over 270 Staff Join All Staff Listening Event

The number of staff joining the All Staff Listening Events continues to increase month on month with no fewer than 271 colleagues joining the event in January. They received a briefing from our Chief Executive as well as an update on the work on refreshing the Trust's values and a variety of questions from staff. Mr Marsh started by thanking staff for all of their efforts over recent weeks. He said: "The last year, but particularly the last few weeks have been particularly difficult for staff throughout the organisation, largely due to the appalling hospital handover delays. The first week of January does seem to be slightly better; 999 demand is down by 10% which we hope will continue. This is largely due to fewer call backs from worried patients and family members as we have been able to get to patients more quickly due to shorter delays handing patients over. Instead of delays of over 30 hours, we are seeing delays of four to five hours, which is bad enough. It is vital for your wellbeing and for patients that we see this improvement continue. I would ask that staff continue to do everything they can to keep themselves safe. We saw a real rise in Covid-19 and flu recently with some staff and patients extremely poorly. It is really important that we do everything we can to keep ourselves safe such as using hand sanitisers, wiping down desks hourly and also getting all of the vaccinations that are available to us. By doing so we keep ourselves safe, our families and colleagues safe and our patients safe too."

News.....

Further Strike Action is Taken

Last month saw two further days of strike action take place as GMB members took to the picket line on Wednesday 11th January before they were joined by Unite colleagues to walk out again on Monday 27th January. Members of both unions took action as part of their continued dispute with the Government and as part of their continuing push for better pay and conditions. Speaking at the Trust Board meeting, Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, said: "I once again want to place on record my thanks to the staff and their representatives who again made sure that the patients of the West Midlands remained safe. The leadership shown by union representatives has been first class and the professionalism and commitment of all staff to put patients first should not be underestimated and ensured that public confidence was maintained."

- Joint Staffside Lead, Reena Farrington, said: "With strong relations between management and Staffside, coupled with the preparations from previous days of action, we were in a strong position as a Trust to manage the industrial action safely. Members who wished to strike were able to do so and show their support in the knowledge that patients who really needed our help would get it. Thank you once again to staff for their support and understanding."
- UNITE Senior Rep, Steve Thompson, added: "As has been said before, we would rather not be in this position. However, if the government refuses to listen and engage with the unions, then the prospect is that the further days of Industrial Action announced, will go ahead. It is worrying that the government also seem to be, in public at least, ignoring the senior management bodies of the NHS, who are calling for this dispute to be resolved."
- Simon Day, Senior Rep for the GMB, said: "I would like to thank both our staff and the public who have shown remarkable support for this action not just here in the West Midlands but across the country. The comments of ordinary people who stopped to speak to picket lines shows the public are just as frustrated with this government as staff, unions and ambulance trusts are with their refusal to resolve this situation."



Trust to Run Further Stab Vest Trial

The Trust Board has agreed to undertake a much larger study into the use of stab proof vests. The decision follows the stabbing of two paramedics in July 2020. A small pilot was run in 2021, with 22 staff, with 17 of them filling out a survey form. While the majority were able to carry out normal activities while wearing the vests, it was noted that in high temperatures, the wearers did perspire significantly. The Board took advice from the Chief Executive who recommended that a larger trial, potentially using a whole hub would be undertaken so that a much wider range of views could be established from staff on their views on wearing stab vests. In addition, legal advice would be sought on whether mandatory use would be required or whether a dynamic risk assessment would suffice. The Trust will also work closely with Staffside representatives to gauge the views of staff and the risk assessment carried out by two of the staff involved in the original trial would be updated. Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, said: "The safety of staff is my number one priority. Keeping you safe when we see the rise in knife crime in our region is uppermost in my mind. However, I know from talking to staff that there are very mixed views about whether we should go down this route so it is the right thing to do to work with staff so that we can establish the best way forward."



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News.....

WMAS Takes Part in Emergency Response Training Event

Eagle-eyed individuals in Stoke may have spotted our attendance to an emergency response training exercise at The Potteries Centre last month. Members of WMAS joined emergency services from across Staffordshire to contribute to the exercise. The centre shut to the public and extra security staff were also on duty to reassure members of the public. It involved students from Keele and Staffordshire Universities acting as shoppers with the event designed to test the response of all stakeholders to a major incident taking place at the centre; in this case it simulated a bladed weapon attack within the shopping centre. It's a great opportunity to test and



exercise our current plans, review and action any lessons identified whilst exposing staff to the challenges and pressures that are faced when responding to these types of incidents. Testing our major incident plans allows us to learn lessons so that we are better able to help patients and save lives should such a situation ever happen for real. A huge thank you to all the staff and commanders who volunteered to give up their own time to assist, to David Levesley and Jim Pitt who organised the exercise.

MERIT Governance Day Takes Place

MERIT's monthly clinical governance day took place at Sandwell Hub in January. The day, which was opened by WMAS Chief Executive Anthony Marsh and MERIT's Clinical Lead Dr Matt Boylan, was spent examining the subject of prehospital resuscitative thoracotomy. London's Air Ambulance Consultant Surgeon Mr Zane Perkins and Endovascular Fellow Dr Rob Greenhalgh kicked off the day with a presentation on the outcome of their latest research examining thoracotomy within their prehospital emergency medicine (PHEM) system. This led on to



presentations and panel discussions to examine three key themes: minimising time to intervention, indications for the procedure and the practical elements of how it is performed. Representatives from key partner PHEM organisations were also present to contribute to the discussions together with clinicians from acute hospital trusts. The programme concluded with an insightful and challenging presentation from Patient Liaison Nurse for London's Air Ambulance, Mr Frank Chege, discussing how and when to speak to families at the scene. The event, coordinated by MERIT Consultant Dr Jake Turner, said: "The day's programme has given us the opportunity to consider where we can develop our systems and capabilities within the West Midlands in order to improve outcomes for critically injured patients." Pictured l to r: Dr Richard Steyn, Anthony Marsh, Dr Matt Boylan and Dr Jake Turner)

Brew Monday Events Help Beat the Blues

Monday 16th January saw many hubs across the region take part in #BrewMonday; a campaign by the Samaritans to encourage people to reach out with one another on what is often called the 'most difficult day of the year'. Blue Monday is a myth and so Samaritans encouraged people to make time for a cuppa and a catch up instead, to connect with family, friends, colleagues and loved ones. Here at WMAS there were lots of fantastic events taking place at various sites across Emergency and Urgent Care and Patient Transport Service hubs as well as 999 and 111 control rooms. From cake competitions, breakfast baps and craft sessions to dog walks, afternoon teas, self-care treats and even a few cuddles from some very cute therapy dogs, there was something for everyone. Many events were supported by Staff Advice and Liaison Service advisors, Union Reps, Freedom to Speak Up ambassadors and other support staff. Manjeet Malhi, Health and Wellbeing Manager, said: "I would like to thank all the managers, SALS, health and wellbeing champions, union representative and all the staff that lead and made these events a huge success. It was amazing to see the entire Trust taking part.

News.....

Defibrillators Do Save Lives

A man whose life was saved by bystander CPR and early defibrillation has met up with the ambulance staff who helped to save his life. The meet up happened a year to the day that Trevor Underhill suffered a cardiac arrest. It also marked the unveiling of a new defibrillator at Tittensor Village Hall, not far from where Trevor suffered his cardiac arrest. Amanda Nagington, Charlotte Scarlett, Adele Gregory, Lucy Barrow and Nicola Smith all met to mark the unveiling of the new community defib. Stoke Operations Manager, Adele Gregory, said: "This was a lovely opportunity to meet up with Trevor and see what a good quality of life he is enjoying. It is all thanks to early chest compression and defib deployed prior to the crews' arrival. It is proof, if ever any were needed that the chain of survival is vital to these successful outcomes. It was also an opportunity for Trevor and his family to have some closure and move on with life, whilst also thanking the friends and family who on the day were so crucial to his successful outcome.



Trust Supports OurJay Foundation at CPR & Defibrillation Event

Last month saw Tim Cronin, Community Response Manager, Nicholas Old, Coventry Clinical Team Mentor, and Paul Rowlands, Warwick Paramedic, support a CPR and Defibrillator awareness event organised by the OurJay Foundation. The OurJay Foundation was launched by the mother of 18-year-old Jamie Rees-Issitt who died following a sudden cardiac arrest in the early hours of New Years Day 2022. The event saw members of the public call in to learn how to do CPR and use a defibrillator, including local MP Mark Pawsey. Tim said: "The work by OurJay and the family of Jamie has been incredible. Their determination to try and ensure that anyone suffering an out of hospital cardiac arrest in Rugby has access to an accessible defibrillator will hopefully help save more lives in the future. As we know, every minute that passes without CPR and defibrillation, the chances of survival decrease by 10%, so it's vital these basic skills are utilised in the first few minutes of a cardiac arrest." The OurJay Foundation's fundraised more than £50,000 so far and they've installed 27 public access defibrillators, with more to come.



Dr Hilary Visits Hollymoor

A familiar face from our television screens visited Hollymoor Hub in January as part of a week long series of reports on the NHS. The Trust was approached by the ITV Lorraine Programme back in November to talk about the ways the Trust was responding to hospital handover delays and also recruitment. After several diary changes, TV GP Dr Hilary Jones visited the Birmingham Hub and talked to paramedics Mandy Clark and Karina Graham. Mandy who has worked for the Trust for 30 years talked about how the job has changed and how the new Ambulance Decision Areas are making a difference while Karina talked about the advantages of the Trust's Student Paramedic programme has for people looking to join the service. The piece finished with both Dr Hilary and Lorraine Kelly thanking all ambulance staff for the amazing job they do every single day to help patients.



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WMAS Round-Up

January 2023: The Numbers



Welcome to the latest monthly stats round-up where we look at performance and demand across the 999 emergency service, NHS 111 and the Trust's Patient Transport Service.

999 Emergency Service



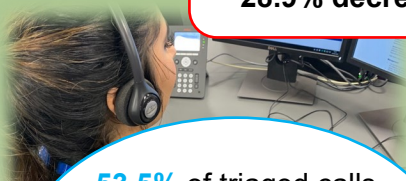
108,831 emergency contacts (inc. all 999 calls, duplicates, events & 111 referrals). **16.2%** decrease on Jan '22

79,277 unique incidents
Average of 2,557 a day
11.4% decrease on Jan '22

22,300 hours lost due to regional hospital handover delays **11.6%** decrease on Jan '22

Hear & Treat
9,541 patients treated over the phone
28.9% decrease on Jan '22

See & Convey
44,473 patients conveyed for further treatment
7.1% decrease on Jan '22



NHS 111

53.5% of triaged calls recommended to contact primary care. Compared to **48.1%** in Jan '22

73% calls answered within 60 seconds. Compared to **34.3%** in Jan '22

11% of triaged calls resulted in an ambulance. Up from **10.4%** in Jan '22

Patient Transport Service



70,857 journeys undertaken across all contracts
5% increase on Jan '22

35,395 Renal journeys (inc. aborted)
4% increase on Jan '22

3,834 aborted journeys
23.6% increase on Jan '22