



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



# MONTHLY Briefing

**March 2024**



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## TRUST TESTS MAJOR INCIDENT RESPONSE IN MULTI-AGENCY EXERCISE

An exercise held in conjunction with Network Rail allowed the Trust to test new major incident triage protocols near to Sutton Coldfield Railway Station...page 2



Also this month....Trust Retains 'Good' Ofsted Rating; We're Finalists in the Disability Smart Awards 2024; Lost Hours Drop, So Do Response Times; Increasing The Number Of Paramedics On The Road and much more...

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## Top Stories.....

### Trust Retains 'Good' Ofsted Rating

Following a visit from the Ofsted inspection team in February, the Trust is delighted to have retained its 'Good' rating. The inspection was the first the Trust has received since 2018 and the first since the National Academy completed its move to Sandwell Hub. Throughout the four-day inspection, from 20<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> February, inspectors interviewed a wide range of staff, including Directors and Apprentices, and were clearly impressed by what they found. Head of Education and Training, Paul Tolley, said: "Clearly the last 12 months has been quite a transition with the move from Brierley Hill to Sandwell, but the hard work of everyone, staff and students alike, has paid off and I would like to thank everyone for their efforts. Moving forwards we will study the report carefully and look to address any areas of development identified by the inspectors." Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, said: "I am extremely proud of Paul and his team for the incredible work they do every day, in training the next generation of paramedics. Everyone within the Education and Training team does a great job, which Ofsted have rightly recognised; well done to you all."



### We're Finalists in the Disability Smart Awards 2024!

The Trust is delighted to announce it has made it to the final of the Disability Smart Awards after being nominated in the Disability Confident Mental Health & Wellbeing in the Workplace category. The award recognises how an organisation has supported employees' mental health and wellbeing in new and innovative ways, demonstrating a positive impact on the lives of their disabled employees and shows how the organisation has thoughtfully considered accessibility and inclusion for everyone when designing how a mental health and wellbeing strategy is delivered. This recognition speaks volumes for all the work that has been done to improve our support networks. What's more, we're the only NHS Trust to be shortlisted and are going head-to-head with international companies. Recruitment Manager, Louise Jones, helped submit our entry titled 'Supporting Our People - #TeamWMAS'. She said: "I was thrilled to be able to pull together all the great work that is currently being done in the Trust by colleagues and I think this accolade recognises how hard everyone works to make WMAS an inclusive place to work. We have so many great things to shout about but we don't stop there, we continue to identify how we can further support both applicants and employees with disabilities to succeed at work." The awards take place in London on 30<sup>th</sup> April and will be available to watch on [livestream](#).



### Major Incident Response Tested at Exercise Royal Oak

A multi-agency exercise held in conjunction with Network Rail near to Sutton Coldfield Railway Station allowed the Trust to test the new ten second triage (TST) and major incident triage tool (MITT) framework recently. The scenario saw a large tree fall bringing down overhead wires and colliding with a passenger train, parts of which then caught fire. Approximately 250 people took part in the overnight exercise, with the Trust sending a National Inter-Agency Liaison Officer, Tactical Incident Commander, Medical Advisor, a Command Group Support Officer, Medical Emergency Response Incident and Central Accident, Resuscitation and Emergency teams, 12 operational managers, a Hazardous Area Response Team and ten ambulances. Meanwhile in the Emergency Operations Centre, a Duty Manager and two members of Incident Command Desk staff also took part. Head of Emergency Preparedness, James Williams, said: "Overall, the exercise was a positive experience for all involved. We committed a significant number of resources which meant we were able to test recent updates to plans and newly implemented triage framework. It was great to see all partners working well together in a challenging environment ensuring the focus was to save as many lives as possible using a collaborative approach. These exercises are a great opportunity to work alongside colleagues to test and exercise our arrangements if ever the worst was to happen."

## Top Stories.....

### Lost Hours Drop, So Do Response Times

No-one could ever say that the number of hours crews spent stuck outside hospitals was acceptable in February but they were less bad than January. The Trust lost 22,766 hours or 785 every day in February, but that was down from 34,933 (1,127) in January. Equally, the number of over hour delays dropped from 10,977 in January to 7,458. What is also noticeable is the way that response times improved markedly between the two months. In fact, when handover delays dropped during the recent junior doctors strike, the Trust got its Category 2 performance down to 26 minutes for the final week of the month. Director of Performance & Improvement, Nathan Hudson, said: "We have been saying for a long time now that when the delays reduce, we can make a real difference in how quickly we can get to patients and this data shows that very clearly. Having said that, I know nobody at the organisation will be happy with our current performance. Too many patients are still waiting far longer than they should for an ambulance to arrive which leads to a worsening of their condition or worse. We will continue to do everything possible to get handover delays down further so that patients get a better service and staff can have meal breaks on time and finish when they should."

	Target		January		February	
	Mean	90th	Mean	90th	Mean	90th
<b>Cat 1</b>	07:00	15:00	08:24	14:57	08:14	14:41
<b>Cat 2</b>	18:00	40:00	43:34	99:37	36:05	80:07



### Increasing the Number of Paramedics on the Road

As you may recall from last month's Briefing, the Trust was given a Section 12 Notice by the Care Quality Commission to meet response times. As a result, an action plan has been formulated which will see the Trust take some difficult decisions to maximise the number of staff on the road responding to patients. Trust Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, said: "It is vital that we concentrate on fulfilling our responsibility as an ambulance service so we will be reducing the number of staff working in hospitals. We have already seen two Ambulance Decision Areas (ADAs) close at Worcester and Shrewsbury when funding was withdrawn by the hospitals, with the service continuing at Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, staffed by the hospital. We are not going to extend the secondments past the end of May for staff working in the ADAs at the three University Hospital Birmingham Hospitals: Good Hope, Heartlands and Queen Elizabeth. We are working with the hospitals and ICB to ensure a smooth transition at the end of May. All staff will be offered suitable alternative positions and / or supported where possible to gain the relevant qualifications to enable them to apply for career development opportunities when vacancies arise in the future."

### Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF) Goes Live

The PSIRF went live on Monday 1st April, replacing the old Serious Incident Framework (SIF) that the Trust has worked under for a number of years. NHS England recognised that the SIF had become reactive, due to the sheer number of investigations required. With a limited number of resources, there was little scope for preventative work to take place in order to improve care. Part of the change will see the removal of root cause analysis and the focus on harm levels being replaced with emphasis on organisational learning and not apportioning blame to individuals. PSIRF promotes a proportionate response to incidents, highlighting learning can be identified and actioned through other methods, rather than just an investigation. Patient Safety Specialist, Leah Harris, said: "I am excited about PSIRF coming to the Trust. This is a positive change, with one focus on improving engagement with those involved in a patient safety incident which includes our staff. This is a real opportunity to change the culture in the Trust, alongside improving patient care, which is important to us all." Chrisy Clinton, Head of Patient Safety, added: "PSIRF will give our patients and staff the ability to be involved in patient safety responses so we can learn together and create a culture of feeling safe to speak up when things go wrong so we can improve future patient care. A number of Learning Response Leads working across the Trust will be available for staff to talk to about any patient safety concerns they have."

## Top Stories.....

### Sharp Increase in FTSU Concerns Welcomed

Last month the Trust Board received an update from Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Guardian, Pippa Wall, who highlighted the sharp rise in the number of concerns made through the FTSU process. The Board heard that up until 15<sup>th</sup> March there had been 79 concerns raised compared to 29 the previous year. Of those, 33% were from colleagues in Emergency and Urgent; Integrated Emergency and Urgent Care accounted for 25%; with 22% from Patient Transport Services. Eleven

Percentage of Concerns by Category		
	WMAS 2023/24	National 2022/23
Patient Safety / Quality	12.7%	19.0%
Staff Safety	26.6%	27.4%
Behavioural / Relationship	51.9%	30.0%
Bullying Harassment	10.1%	21.7%
Systems / Processes	38.0%	Not Published
Cultural	22.8%	
Middle Management	20.3%	
Senior Management	12.7%	
Leadership	1.3%	
Positive Improvement Suggestions	1.3%	

percent related to other departments, one percent related to other providers, with the final 8% not stated. Pippa said: "The highest reported category of concern remains around behaviour and relationships at work. Some relate to management, but the majority relate to peers. Staff safety concerns remain the third highest reporting category, this includes matters relating to staff wellbeing and psychological safety. This is a subjective area and considers the perception of the member of staff raising it. It is interesting to note the differences between our Trust and the national picture." Trust Chairman, Prof. Ian Cumming, added: "The Board welcomes the progress that has been made in relation to FTSU and it is pleasing to see the rise, as this demonstrates that staff have an increasing confidence in the process which is welcome." FTSU continues to develop with a further 11 FTSU Ambassadors going through training to supplement the 46 already in position.

### 'Don't Listen to Respond, Listen to Understand'

That was one of the key messages to come out of the National Guardian Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Conference that the Trust attended in Birmingham last month. The Trust's Lead FTSU Guardian, Pippa Wall, attended the event together with Guardians and Leaders from across the NHS, whilst FTSU Guardian, Lucy Butler, FTSU Exec Lead, Vivek Khashu, and Non-Executive Director, Alex Hopkins, all joined the event remotely. The ambulance service featured heavily in the opening speech of National Guardian Jayne Chidgey-Clarke, following the recent NGO review of Ambulance Trusts and NHSE's cultural review of the sector. As part of her speech, the ambulance sector was congratulated on being the most improved sector in the NHS Staff Survey. As well as the chance to listen to inspirational speakers, the conference also allowed the chance for the FTSU



community to network, share good practice and explore ways to remove barriers to speaking up. Pippa said: "It was an interesting conference and a good opportunity to meet fellow Guardians and hear some of the success stories and challenges they face. Throughout the conference there were messages around dignity, respect, understanding diversity, identifying barriers to speaking up, the importance of impartiality and the vital role of identifying and managing detriment."

## News.....

### Meet the Mental Health Clinical Development Officer Team

The Trust has employed a team of Mental Health Clinical Development Officers who will be working to develop and deliver a range of learning resources for staff to give them more tools to help support mental health patients. The team is made up of Michaela Evans and Jehu Feuba (pictured). Michaela joined the team in November 2023 after spending eight years as an Education Training Officer. She is also a qualified counsellor for adults, young people and children. Jehu, who joined the team in December, is a Mental Health Nurse and qualified teacher with a Masters in Education. Both bring a wealth of knowledge in education and mental health and will soon be joined by another person in the team who will specialise in the development and delivery of Technology Enhanced Learning resources. They have begun to deliver CPD events and will be delivering the first face to face session, which will focus on 'Tools for supporting patients in need of Mental Health Emergency Care'. Moving forwards, they will be working to produce even more opportunities for both online and in-person learning across a range of topics tailored to different areas of the organisation; this will include mental health assessment, mental health in maternity, trauma informed care and addiction.



### Chair's Award Goes to Adam

Sandwell Paramedic, Adam Aston has been presented with this year's Chair's Award for his work as a staff Governor and member of the ceremonial unit. Adam was invited to join the recent Trust Board meeting to receive his award from Prof, Ian Cumming. The Chairman thanked Adam for his work over the last 10 years as a staff Governor in which time he was involved in the appointment of every single one of the current Non-Executive Directors. Prof. Cumming said: "Adam has recently become the Shadow Cabinet member for public health on Dudley Council so didn't put himself forward for election this time as it would have been a conflict of interest. I really don't know how he finds the time because as well as a being paramedic, he is part of our Ceremonial Unit and went to London as part of the funeral for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and only recently was invested as a member of the Most Venerable Order of St John after approval from His Majesty, King Charles III in recognition of his work over the past 14 years for the charity." Thanking the Chairman, Adam said: "The award really is unexpected. I really enjoyed my time as a Staff Governor, working with Sarah Lawson representing colleagues. It was a strange being on the road one day and appointing Non-Executives the next, but it's good that staff are involved in the process."



### Medical Director Receives Honorary Doctorate of Science

The Trust's Medical Director, Dr Alison Walker, was thrilled to be presented with an Honorary Doctorate of Science by Coventry University in March. It was presented in honour of her contribution to the enhancement of pre-hospital care across the West Midlands and the country. Alison has worked for the NHS for more than 30 years and has been with WMAS since 2010. She is also the Chair of JRCALC, the Joint Royal Colleges Ambulance Liaison Committee, which sets the guidelines for how all ambulance staff operate from a clinical perspective. Last year she received a prestigious Gold Medal from the Royal College of Emergency Medicine for her work developing links between hospitals and ambulance services during the pandemic. Alison is also heavily involved in research, not only undertaking investigations herself, but supporting others to make steps forward in medical care. She said: "I am really delighted to have received the Honorary Doctorate as it's lovely to have that level of recognition from an academic body. This was supposed to have happened a year ago but I suffered a brain haemorrhage and got to see the NHS from a different perspective, as a patient. Having spent three months in hospital and been further supported during my recovery, I really appreciate everything that staff within the NHS do to support patients every single day."



## News.....

### International Women's Day Celebrations Across the Trust

Staff across the Trust took part in the International Women's Day celebrations last month, both members of the Trust Women's Network and those on shift at Hollymoor Hub enjoyed the celebrations. The Trust Women's Network enjoyed a day of empowerment with an event including guest speakers discussing topics such as: sexual safety and misogyny, body confidence and a self defence class, along with insightful discussions from those there



on the day. Becky Godfrey, Chair of the Trust Women's Network, said: "It was a fantastic day and I want to thank everyone for giving up their time to attend. This years theme of 'Inspire and Inclusion' is at the heart of what we want and aim for the network to achieve and it was great to see so many people there on the day." The celebrations didn't end there as staff on shift at Hollymoor Hub were able to take part in International Women's Day celebrations organised by Paramedic, Grace Millington.

### Record Viewing Figures

The results are in and a new record has been broken! The first five episodes of Series 10 of '999 on the Frontline' have just finished being aired on Channel 4 and the viewing figures show that the programme is more popular than ever. In the final episode, over 1,000,000 people watched the staff from Stoke, Stafford and Willenhall helping patients. It's the first time that the programme has been on the main channel having moved from More4, which saw audiences of 500,000. Bosses at Channel 4 are said to be delighted as are the team at Curve Media who make the programme. Communications Director, Murray MacGregor, said: "It is absolutely brilliant that so many people want to see the care and compassion that staff have for patients and the ability you have to deal with a huge range of incidents. Thank you to all of the staff who took part and the managers who helped to arrange the filming." Series 11, 12 and 13 have already been filmed and will be shown from later in the year.



### Iftar Brings Leaders Together

An interfaith Iftar event hosted by the Consul General of Pakistan in Birmingham, Sardar Adnan Rashid, brought faith leaders and emergency services together in March to learn more about Ramadan. Assistant Chief Officers Craig Cooke and James Williams joined Trust Chaplain, Mohammed Asad at the event. It was an opportunity for the group to come together to hear more about what Ramadan means to the Muslim community and enjoy each other's company whilst breaking the fast.



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## News.....

### Thank You Andy for All You Have Done

After many years with the Trust, Community Response Manager, Andy Jaynes, retired at the end of March. Andy has helped recruit and support literally thousands of community first responders over the years and trained many more people in CPR. Recently, he attended the Community First Responder (CFR) Regional Forum, where co-ordinators were able to wish him well in his new life. Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer, Nick Henry, who has CFRs in his portfolio, said: "Andy has been an integral part of our CFR schemes for so many years. He has led some incredibly innovative work and his actions will undoubtedly have helped to save countless lives. Andy retiring will be quite a change for the team and comes as the coordination of CFRs passes from me to Aidan Brown, Head of Enhanced Care. All of the CFRs at the meeting were delighted to see Andy and wished him well for the future."



### An Incredible 36 Years of Service

After almost 36 years of service, Team WMAS has bid farewell to David Stringfellow from Warwick Patient Transport Service. Dave started back in 1988 on the 15<sup>th</sup> May with the then Warwickshire Ambulance Service, and has served his whole career on PTS, predominantly stationed at the same base in Warwick. Locality Supervisor Matt Hodges said: "His wealth of experience and knowledge has enabled him to guide and support countless numbers of his colleagues through the years, including myself. His quirky sense of humour, for which he is known, will be missed by all at Coventry and Warwick PTS. Thank you Dave for all you have done." He recently enjoyed a farewell dinner with many of his colleagues, both past and present, and after a well-earned rest, Dave plans to quite literally get back on his bike and continue his lifelong love of cycling.



### A Fond Farewell to Staffs CFRs

A group of Community First Responders (CFRs) from Wetton & Alstonefield in Staffordshire have decided it's time to step back from responding and enjoy their retirement. Sally Stickland, who has completed 17 years, Carrie Ross, who has completed 18 years, and Denise Noble, who has completed 10 years, all finished their last shift in February. Sally said: "I wish to thank all the Staffordshire and Helimed crews who have supported me and the group over the years. Special thanks also go to the crews that have joined us at Thors Cave, Thorpe Cloud, Lovers Leap and many other big hills. I definitely won't miss negotiating the Dovedale Stepping Stones carrying lots of kit, though!" Although they are stepping down as CFRs, they will still be available in the village as Cardiac Arrest Responders and fetching the defibrillator to patients in need. On behalf of everyone in the Community Response Team and also West Midlands Ambulance Service, we thank them for their collective service amounting to 45 years serving your community and wish them all the best for the future!



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# WMAS Round-Up

## March 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



**143,189** emergency contacts (inc. all 999 calls, duplicates, events & 111 referrals). **8.1% increase** on Mar '23

**85,897** unique incidents  
Average of 2,770 a day  
**1.7% decrease** on Mar '23

**23,475** hours lost due to regional hospital handover delays - **26% increase** on Mar '23

**Hear & Treat**  
**14,033** patients treated over the phone  
**9% decrease** on Mar '23

**See & Convey**  
**46,607** patients conveyed for further treatment  
**0.3% increase** on Mar '23



**139,168** 999 calls received compared to 128,521, an **increase of 8.2%** on Mar '23

**0 mins 02 seconds**, the mean answering time compared to 0.02 in Mar '23

**79.6%** of addresses matched in less than 60 seconds, compared to 78.6% in Mar '23

### Patient Transport Service



**67,295** journeys undertaken across all contracts  
**8.2% decrease** on Mar '23

**34,189** Renal journeys (including aborted)  
**6.1% decrease** on Mar '23

**3,371** aborted journeys  
**13.4% decrease** on Mar '23