



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



# MONTHLY Briefing

May 2022



Follow us on social media  
by searching for  
OfficialWMAS

## INVALUABLE WEEKEND AT BIRMINGHAM 2022 COMMONWEALTH GAMES TEST EVENTS

Recently, the Trust deployed a number of assets to venues and control rooms as part of the overall preparedness for this summer's Commonwealth Games in Birmingham....more on page 2



Also this month....Best in the Country at Call Answering; WMAS Recognised as Leading Digital Trust; Almost 1000 Staff to be Recruited; Prestigious Award for Alison and much more....

Trust us to care.

## Top Stories.....

### Invaluable Weekend at Birmingham2022 Test Events

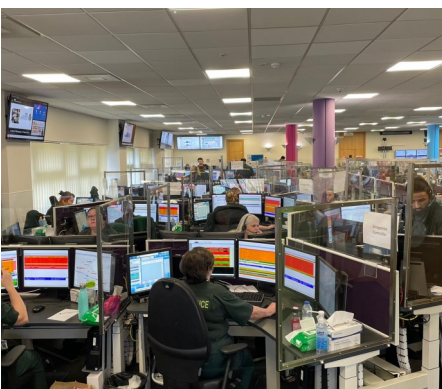
May saw the Trust deploy a number of assets to venues and control rooms as part of the overall preparedness for this summer's Commonwealth Games (CWG) in Birmingham. The events at the Alexander Stadium in Perry Barr (Diamond League) and the brand-new Sandwell Aquatics Centre (Swim England) proved to be a real success, as well as the opportunity to test processes whilst supporting medical cover alongside Organising Committee colleagues. WMAS Head of Emergency Planning and Commonwealth Games, James Williams, said: "It was fantastic to see many of our staff supporting the events both at stadium venues and within control rooms. It allowed us to prove our concept of operations and take on feedback to enhance our response during Games time, to make sure we will support a 'safe and secure games'. I would like to thank everyone who supported the operation and the CWG



planning team for their continued hard work as we move closer to Games time." Tactical Resource and Accreditation Manager, Cameron McVittie, added: "The last few months have been extremely busy for the project team, preparing accreditation and shift allocations for more than 700 staff members. I would like to thank them all for the patience and commitment shown to our project so far." Among staff working at the test events was Research Paramedic, Josh Miller, who said: "It was really good to be a part of the weekend's testing and see the site at The Alexander Stadium, have a walk around and see how our operations will work during the Games. It's really great to be working, not only with those at WMAS, but others within the community and multi-agency partners at events like this. After a really difficult couple of years for all of us, it's so nice to be doing something a bit different and helping to make a part of history."

### Trust is Best in the Country at Call Answering

New data from BT shows just how strong the Trust's call handling performance is when compared to the rest of the country. Of the 37,107 emergency calls to ambulance services in England that took over two minutes to answer, just eight were in the West Midlands. What's more, that is an improvement on April 2021 and is also down from the 28 the Trust had in March 2022. Jeremy Brown, Integrated Emergency and Urgent Care Director, said: "We all know how important it is to answer the phone quickly, particularly in cases of cardiac arrests where every second counts, so for us to have so few over two minute calls is testament to the hard work of everyone within the Integrated Emergency & Urgent Care team. While eight is good, I know we would all want to see that number as zero, but staff should not let that take away from the fact that they took 139,402 emergency calls last month! I am pleased that the many new staff who have joined us in the last few months are really helping to make a difference in how we perform. I send them all my thanks for all they are doing – we all know that we are the starting point of a patient's journey and therefore we need to make sure that we are doing everything possible to help people in their hour of need and that is something I know they are all aware of and work so hard to ensure we provide a really good service."



	WMAS	Trust 1	Trust 2	Trust 3	Trust 4	Trust 5	Trust 6	Trust 7	Trust 8	Trust 9	Total
April 22	8	6,008	445	4,481	1,019	4,557	6,713	3,391	6,181	4,304	37,107
April 21	13	26	99	14	39	92	360	158	49	678	1,528

## Top Stories.....

### WMAS Recognised as Leading Digital Trust

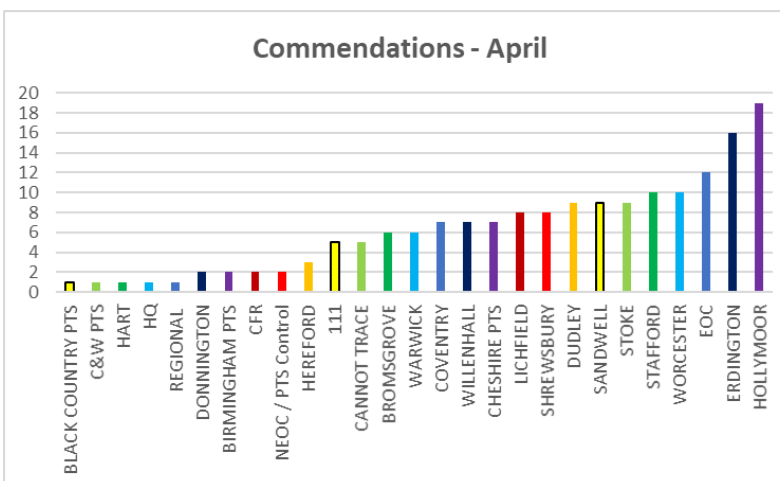
The Trust's ability to utilise world-class digital tools is what's helped it to become one of just two ambulance services in the country to receive accreditation from NHS England and Improvement as part of its Global Digital Exemplar (GDE) programme. Tuesday 17th May saw the NHS Digital Engagement Lead for the Midlands visit Trust HQ to officially present colleagues with the accreditation. This accolade means the Trust is an internationally recognised NHS provider, delivering improvements in the quality of patient care, through the world-class use of digital technologies and information. Through the GDE projects, the Trust has significantly changed access to records for WMAS clinicians whilst with patients, digitised the 'Make Ready' processes, and overcome the many challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as support staff working from home and Patient Transport Service vehicles being allocated to support 999 operations.



Head of IM&T, Phil Collins, said: "Traditionally we have focussed on delivering IT equipment, but digital draws more attention to how technology is used and the impact on patients. This change of perspective helps deliver more benefit to our community." Operational Support Services Director, Craig, Cooke, added: "A huge amount of work has been completed over the last few years to get to this point, and I want to thank all the staff who have taken on and completed the GDE. Thanks also to the NHS Digital team – the whole process has been useful and a learning experience as well. It has certainly impacted how we will deliver projects moving forward. It's important to recognise how extremely impressed the NHS Digital team were with Phil's work and management of our GDE effort and recognised his significant contribution to the GDE both here, in the sector and regionally."

### Almost Six Commendations A Day

Given the Trust experienced its worst ever month for hospital handover delays in April and subsequently had some very long response times, it is notable to see that the public still sent in almost six commendations for the actions of staff every day during the month.

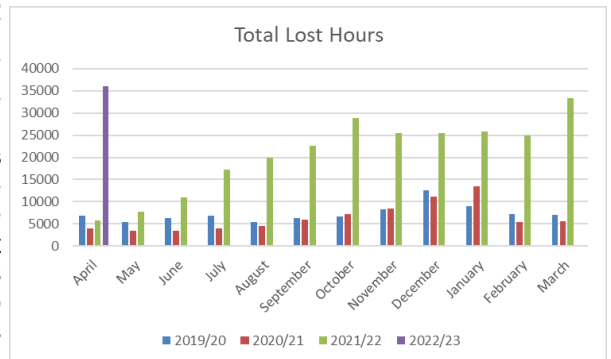


In total, 169 patients, their family or friends got in contact with the Trust to say 'thank you' for the care that was provided. Trust Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, said: "Those staff in our control rooms and on the road know better than most just how tough April was, yet their actions still made a difference to so many people's lives. Even in these challenging times, they should take strength from the fact that their actions are making a difference to the lives of the people we are trying to help. It is easy to forget how much of a difference we make to thousands of patients every day, but these commendations are a reminder of just how important our role is in helping people."

## Top stories.....

### Worst Month Ever for Hospital Handover Delays

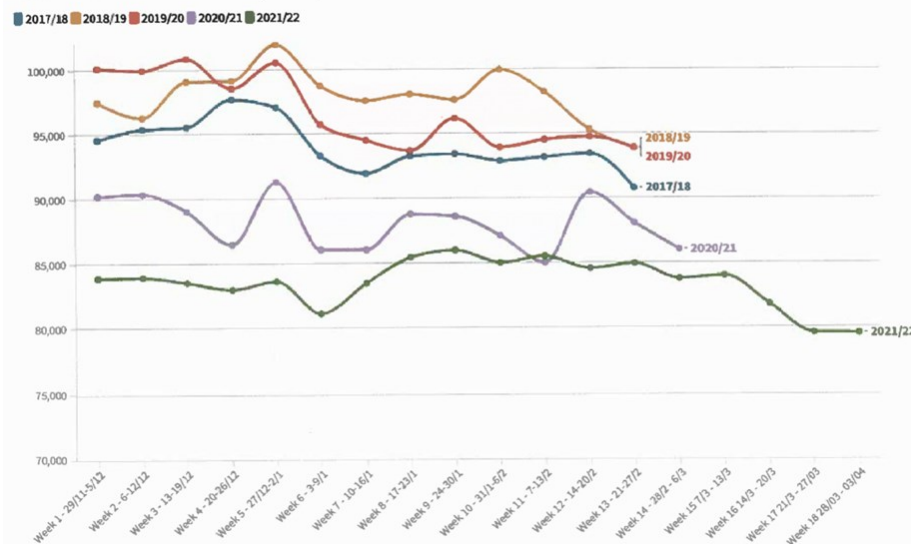
Just when we thought it couldn't get any worse, it did. April 2022 became the worst month ever for hospital handover delays with just shy of 36,000 hours lost by the Trust. The total of 35,957 hours and 50 minutes is the equivalent of losing 100 ambulance shifts every single day. Director of Nursing and Clinical Commissioning, Mark Docherty said: "What is really worrying is that the numbers just seem to be getting worse at a time when we should be seeing the lowest number of handover delays. The delays are five times as bad as they were in April 2019, the last comparison year before COVID. What I would say is, that it is down to our staff, who continue to do everything they can to help the situation that has seen a reduction in the number of patients being taken to hospital. The use of alternative pathways is up and they are able to discharge many more patients at home. Equally, the work of staff in our control rooms and the Clinical Validation Team is making a real difference to patients, for which I am very grateful."



### Fewer Patients Than Ever Being Taken to Hospital

New data submitted to NHS England during the traditional 'winter reporting' period shows the dramatic reduction in patients being taken to A&E by ambulance services. It shows that rates have fallen steadily over the last four years. On the graph, you can see that in November 2019, almost 100,000 patients were taken to an emergency department by ambulance. By 2021, that had dropped to around 84,000. The drop is also shown in early 2022 as winter reporting continued until the beginning of April whereas in previous years it has finished in February. Medical Director, Dr Alison Walker, said: "This data clearly shows the tremendous improvements that have been made by ambulance services in reducing the number of patients taken to EDs through having more paramedics and better use of alternative pathways. We all know that hospitals are under tremendous pressure so everything that we can do to manage patients through other specialist services in hospitals or in the community, can only help. This data shows the success of these alternative clinical pathways and we will continue to act in the best interests of patients."

**Ambulance Arrivals: A Yearly Comparison**



### Almost 1,000 Staff to Be Recruited

With pressure on the Service continuing, the Trust is launching one of the most ambitious recruitment plans to date. In total, the Recruitment Team will be looking to appoint at least 1,000 new staff during the current financial year. That number includes over 600 operational staff for E&U made up of 484 student paramedics and over 100 graduate paramedics. In addition, the Trust will be looking to train 40 existing paramedics into the role of operations managers (OMs) this year. The Trust is also looking to take on more than 200 additional call handlers so we can maintain our position as the best performing call centre in the country. In addition, the Trust is also looking to increase the number of staff working within the non-emergency patient transport service to the tune of over 100 additional staff. Trust Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, said: "Many of you have told me just how tough it is out there at the moment, which is why we are doing everything possible to make the situation better."

## News.....

### The Impacts of Handover Delays

The Trust was in the news towards the end of May over the issue of handover delays with dire warnings about the potential consequences if no action is taken. At a meeting of the Trust Board, a considerable period of time was spent looking at the data and working out what can be done about the situation. Trust Chairman, Prof. Ian Cumming, said: "The current situation has an enormous impact on staff. Some of them have told me how they dread coming to work for fear of spending an entire shift at hospital; of being late finishing, again; of student paramedics not seeing enough cases to complete their training; of finding patients in awful situations because of prolonged delays; knowing that we could have done more to help. The huge increase in Serious Incidents and the rise in complaints as well as the performance data can leave no-one in any doubt as to what is happening." Trust Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, added: "I absolutely recognise the pressure, stress and anxiety that the current situation is having on staff, be it call handlers, dispatchers or crews at the scene. While we are doing everything we can through lower conveyances, we will be working with the Region to hold each area to account for the action plans they put in place recently. It is imperative that we get movement on this issue, but be assured we are doing the very best we can to do the right thing for staff and patients."

### Prestigious Award for Alison

The Trust's Medical Director has received a prestigious award from the Royal College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM) for her outstanding work over the last 17 years, but in particular during the pandemic. Dr Alison Walker received one of only four medals that are handed out by the RCEM each year. The citation from RCEM President, Dr Katherine Henderson, says: "Dr Walker is awarded a medal for outstanding contribution to RCEM, following the vital link and support she provided between emergency medicine and the ambulance services which has been essential during the pandemic. Alison's work in this area has helped us building stronger mutual respect and communications." RCEM Vice President, Dr Adrian Boyle, added: "Alison has always had a cool head during several pandemic related crises. Her calm and collaborative approach, combined with complete integrity is an inspiration to us all." Dr Walker, said: "I am clearly very honoured to receive the medal. I have been able to work with many people within the ambulance and emergency medicine sectors over the years and together we have been able to make some very important changes that are helping patients. As an ED Consultant myself, there is so much crossover between the two sectors that it is vital that we work together, so it is nice that all the hard work that so many have put into this field is being recognised."



### Extension of FLO Scheme

Some eight years ago the decision was made by Trust Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, to develop a Family Liaison Officer (FLO) service for the Trust. This was originally aimed at supporting parents and families of those who tragically lost children, up to the age of 18. If requested by the family, the FLO would provide support for up to six months, providing empathy, compassion and ensuring the family understood what had taken place. The decision has now been made to extend the scheme further and provide support to families of anyone involved in a tragic death that ambulance crews have attended. The scheme is now also open for the families of our own staff who may need additional support at what will be the most tragic time of their life. Mr Marsh was on hand to thank all of the FLOs, including some new members, upon revealing the news and to launch the new training programme that will be required for the additional support to be provided. Jason Wiles, Consultant Paramedic for Emergency Care will be leading the team of FLOs and said: "This is an important step we are taking to help provide further support for those who have lost loved ones and are going through a very difficult time in their life. I have a really strong team behind me with lots of experience who I know will do an incredible job in providing empathy and support when it is required."



programme that will be required for the additional support to be provided. Jason Wiles, Consultant Paramedic for Emergency Care will be leading the team of FLOs and said: "This is an important step we are taking to help provide further support for those who have lost loved ones and are going through a very difficult time in their life. I have a really strong team behind me with lots of experience who I know will do an incredible job in providing empathy and support when it is required."

## News.....

### Supporting Communities with Defibrillators & Bleed Control Kits

We know the use of a defibrillator can increase the chances of survival if used within the first few minutes of a cardiac arrest, which is why we promote the placement of Public Access Defibrillators across our communities. During May, the Trust has been installing a dual-purpose Public Access Defibrillator and Bleed Control Kit cabinet on each of our sites across the region. Our sites are spread throughout the West Midlands and are perfectly suited to house these life saving devices which have been funded by NHS Charities Together. Tim Cronin, Community Response Manager, said: "We should lead by example. If we promote these cabinets within the community, then it is only right that we should follow our own advice by placing these public access cabinets on each of our sites. Every minute that goes by without CPR or the use of a defibrillator, the chances of survival reduce by 10%. It is fantastic that we can continue to support the work of the Daniel Baird Foundation by having a dual-purpose cabinet also housing a Bleed Control Kit."



### Chairman to Visit All Sites to Talk to Staff

"When speaking to staff, the thing I hear regularly is that they want to see the Board and senior managers out and about so that they can talk to us." In May's Trust Board meeting, Chairman, Prof. Ian Cumming highlighted that he is to visit all Trust sites to meet with the local management teams and then spend time out on shift with staff at that site. Prof. Cumming said: "What staff have told me is that they miss being able to talk to senior leaders, not only to raise concerns but also put forward ideas and highlight good practice. While we rightly stepped back from going out and about during the COVID-19 pandemic, the time is right to reinstate them. I had a very good visit to Hollymoor over Easter and my next site visit will be in Shrewsbury but I will be going to each hub, Patient Transport Service site, HART, MERIT and corporate department. I look forward to meeting staff at each site and hearing your comments."

### International Nurses Day

May marked International Nurses Day, which celebrates the contribution that nurses make to societies around the world. The day is celebrated around the world every 12<sup>th</sup> May, the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth. Head of 111, Rob Till, said: "Nurses should be prouder than ever! Along with the rest of the staff at Navigation Point, our team of nurses has played a pivotal role in providing outstanding care to the hundreds of thousands of patients who have needed our help, not just as a result of the pandemic. This last few years have shattered the stereotypes of nursing, the world has seen first-hand the fundamental role nursing plays in our society."



### Paramedic Mick Part of #WorkWithoutFear Campaign

The national ambulance service violence and aggression campaign released new assets in May which feature Willenhall Paramedic, Michael Hipgrave. He's the fourth member of staff from WMAS to take part in the #WorkWithoutFear campaign, launched by the Association of Ambulance Service Chief Executives (AAACE) in February. Mick was stabbed whilst trying to help a patient in 2020 along with his crewmate Deena Evans. The social media graphics and video touch on the emotional and mental effects of the incident and aims to highlight

the profound impact of abuse on the everyday lives of ambulance staff. May also included a case study from Sam, a Paramedic from another service. John Kelly, Head of Security & Safety, said: "The case studies really do show the immense impact any form of abuse has on staff. What I hope this hard-hitting campaign does is persuade individuals to have some compassion and consideration for their feelings and safety when they meet our staff and to treat them with respect." To see the latest hard hitting video featuring Michael and to find out more about the campaign, visit [www.aaace.org.uk/vaa](http://www.aaace.org.uk/vaa).



### Bec Takes Over at Lichfield

Following the news that Graeme Jones has been named as the Trust's new Head of Infection, Prevention and Control, Bec Flintason has been appointed as the new Senior Operations Manager at Lichfield, on an interim basis. Bec joined WMAS in 2005 and has previously worked on the Patient Transport Service in Coventry and Warwickshire before joining Emergency and Urgent operations as an Emergency Care Assistant in 2008. She then became a technician, and subsequently a paramedic at Chelmsley Wood, before moving to Ward End as a rapid response paramedic. In 2015 she began managerial development before securing substantive Operations Manager positions at Lichfield and Erdington. Bec said: "I am thrilled to have this opportunity and am really looking forward to continuing Graeme's good work. I have been given a lovely welcome by everyone at the hub for which I am very grateful." Emergency Services Operations Deliver Director, Nathan Hudson, said: "This is a fantastic and deserved opportunity for Bec and I know she will take the role and make it her own. Graeme did a really good job at Lichfield and I thank him for his effort in doing so, be confident that the hub is in safe hands with Bec."



### Student Paramedic Ella to Represent Region as Batonbearer

Student paramedic Ella Davies has overcome many challenges in her life, including three major operations and living with a 'visible difference'. But despite those hurdles, Ella has never stopped being who she wants to be and achieving great things. It was her work as a campaigner for Changing Faces and her recent accomplishment of becoming a student paramedic that led Ella's extremely proud father to nominate her to be a Batonbearer for this summer's Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. Ella said: "He only told me after he'd nominated me! But when I found out that not only had I been nominated, but I'd been selected too – I was quite shocked! There were lots of people who had been nominated to be Batonbearers, so to be picked out of that many people was quite exciting and scary. My immediate thought was – what if I drop it?!" Ella, who was born with a rare condition called cranio-frontal-nasal dysplasia, will represent the West Midlands with the baton on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July, just over a week before the Games begin. Batonbearers have been selected in all nine regions of England and reflect the diversity in communities across the country. The baton will arrive in the West Midlands on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July.



### Memorial Bench Unveiled in Honour of Former Director

A memorial bench was unveiled at the Trust's ambulance hub in Stafford in May in memory of Peter Murtagh, a distinguished former Director of the Trust who sadly died in 2013. Peter's wife Gill joined Trust Chief Executive Anthony Marsh for the unveiling of the bench, which is located in the Memorial Garden. Every year since Peter's passing, the Trust has presented the Peter Murtagh Inspirational Award at its annual awards ceremony and a special presentation of the award will take place in September, marking all seven previous winners. However, the Trust decided it would like to have a visual representation to remember Peter by as well, which is why the bench has been installed in Staffordshire, where Peter began his ambulance career. Unveiling the bench, Trust Chief Executive Anthony Marsh, said: "For all of us, Peter meant so much, he was a great colleague who always did a great job and always wanted to do the right thing, in the right way. He was an inspiration to colleagues, was incredibly insightful, always giving great advice. This is a fitting way of remembering Peter, reflecting his professionalism and dedication to the ambulance service."





# WMAS Round-Up

## May 2022: 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



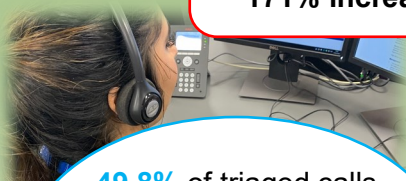
**131,824** emergency contacts (inc. all 999 calls, duplicates, events & 111 referrals). **0.75% increase** on May '21

**90,689** unique incidents  
Average of 2,925 a day  
**10.7% decrease** on May '21

**28,436** hours lost due to regional hospital handover delays  
**264% increase** on May '21

**Hear & Treat**  
**13,595** patients treated over the phone  
**171% increase** on May '21

**See & Convey**  
**49,771** patients conveyed for further treatment  
**16.4% decrease** on May '21



### NHS 111

**49.8%** of triaged calls recommended to contact primary care. Compared to 59.3% in May '21

**96.9%** calls answered within 60 seconds. Compared to 67.9% in May '21

**11.3%** of triaged calls resulted in an ambulance. Down from 12.3% in May '21

### Patient Transport Service



**71,983** journeys undertaken across all contracts  
**9.1% increase** on May '21

**34,702** Renal journeys (inc. aborted)  
**9.2% increase** on May '21

**3,485** aborted journeys  
**32.7% increase** on May '21