



**Chief Executive's Briefing for Key Stakeholders  
December 2009**

I am writing to provide you with a briefing on North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust in terms of performance, service developments and current challenges. This is part of our ongoing commitment to keep our stakeholders regularly informed with the progress of the Trust. I hope you find this information helpful and of interest. If you would like to comment on the content of this briefing or find out any further information, please contact Asiya Jelani, Head of Communications, at [Asiya.jelani@nwas.nhs.uk](mailto:Asiya.jelani@nwas.nhs.uk) or on 01204 498400.

**Emergency Performance**

As you may be aware, the North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust (NWAS) has been experiencing an extremely high level of demand, in excess of normal projections, since July this year. In order to meet these operational pressures, the Trust escalated to REAP Level 4 in October.

The Resource Escalation Action Plan, or REAP, is an integral part of the Trust's Business Continuity management strategy and is in operation at all times. It enables the Trust to ensure that its service can be maintained when 'disruptive' challenges occur in the local environment, such as increased activity, significant loss of staff, buildings and resources, or pressures within the wider NHS. In general it will operate at lower levels when the service is operating within normal parameters and will escalate when pressures occur.

The REAP is designed to increase operational resource in line with demand in order to assist the service in coping with periods of high pressure and maintain the quality of patient care.

In order for NWAS to meet its performance targets, a tipping point for Category A has been identified at 6000 calls per week. This has been exceeded by a significant margin every week since early September, and in the last week of October there were 7094 Category A responses.

Year to date performance for the Trust, since April 09 is;

Area	Cat A 8	Cat A 19	Cat B 19
<b>NWAS as a whole</b>	<b>73.75%</b>	<b>95.74%</b>	<b>86.84%</b>
Cumbria & Lancashire	<b>73.58%</b>	<b>95.98%</b>	<b>91.26%</b>
Greater Manchester	<b>73.51%</b>	<b>96.51%</b>	<b>88.29%</b>
Cheshire & Merseyside	<b>74.08%</b>	<b>94.69%</b>	<b>81.21%</b>

Since October, the Trust has put a number of measures in place in order to significantly improve its operational performance and steady progress is being made. Internal focus has been around resource availability, addressing our vacancies to strengthen the Trust's ability to meet peaks in demand and implementing best practice with support from national colleagues. External focus has been on working in partnership with acute trust colleagues to reduce hospital turnaround times for ambulances and improving processes for intra and inter hospital transfers and GP Urgent referrals. NWAS' existing Urgent Care desk in its control centre is being strengthened and will become a hub for Category C (calls classified as neither serious nor life threatening) triage and Clinical Dispatch support.

The Trust is making good progress with these measures and is hopeful that its performance trajectory will improve with partnership working.

### **Winter/Flu Planning**

NWAS, along with its NHS colleagues has rigorous plans in place for Pandemic Flu and winter preparedness. We have consulted widely with our partners on this and tested our plans alongside other organisations to ensure that they are integrated. The Trust is now in the midst of a wide Swine Flu vaccination programme and is encouraging all frontline staff to have the vaccine.

In terms of public communications, NHS organisations in the North West are backing a campaign to help people with minor illnesses and ailments over the winter period to get the right treatment as fast as possible; and ensure that those people with serious health problems are treated quickly.

Choose Well is a region wide information campaign to let people know about the range of services available; give them information to help them to "stay well" over the winter period; and to reinforce the message that 999 and A&E services are for those who are seriously ill or for emergencies. NWAS will be displaying these messages on their ambulances across the North West.

### **Care Quality Commission – Infection Control**

The Trust has made significant progress with Infection Control and welcomes the findings of the CQC's most recent inspection report – they are a positive reflection of the dedication and commitment shown by all Trust staff in ensuring we fulfilled the aims of the Infection Control Action Plan we implemented in response to the recommendations set by the CQC in August.

The report, published on the CQC's website, shows that the Trust is now compliant with regulations to protect patients, workers and other service users from acquiring health associated infections. It also highlights some of the stringent measures NWAS have successfully implemented to address Infection Control.

The Trust has placed the issue firmly high on the agenda and it is important that we continue to maintain a high-level of cleanliness for the health and well-being of patients and staff.

Vehicle cleanliness and hygiene will however remain a high priority for the Trust – NWAS will continue with a fully audited programme of routine and deep cleaning all Trust vehicles and onboard equipment with managers and supervisors carrying out spot checks to closely monitor this process. All Infection Control audits will continue to be presented at the weekly Performance meeting and reported to the Board every month.

Next year's mandatory staff training programme will also continue to include Infection Control to ensure all staff are fully up to date with the latest standards and procedures. To read the report from the CQC please visit: [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

## **Foundation Trust**

As you will be aware from previous correspondence, the Trust took the decision to defer its public consultation from September 2009 to focus all organisational efforts on the key priorities such as performance and improving cleanliness of its vehicles.

The Trust met with the Strategic Health Authority in October 2009 to discuss the FT application trajectory as a result of the challenges in delivering sustained performance and the recent discussion with commissioners regarding their financial and associated commissioning plans. The SHA recognised that the current timeline needed to be adjusted to take account of the above factors and also the impact of a general election. A proposed revised timeline was submitted and agreed by NWAS' Trust Board on 28 October.

The revised dates agreed with the NHS North West are:

- April 2010
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Formal Submission of the Integrated Business Plan (IBP) and Long Term Financial Model (LTFM)
- July 2010 – September 2010
  - Consultation Period
- September/October 2010
  - Final Submission of IBP & LTFM
- December 2010
  - DoH Applications Committee
- Jan 2011
  - Monitor Assessment commence
- April 2011
  - Potential Authorisation Date.

## **Workforce Modernisation Programme**

The Trust is working closely with its staff side colleagues to move its modernisation agenda forward through workforce redesign. The Trust is currently undertaking a ballot for staff to vote on proposals put together jointly by management and staff side. The main elements of the proposal are;

- The Trust will move towards a skill mix which provides for a HPC registered Paramedic on all emergency vehicles.

- All existing Technicians will be invited to extend their role and skills and accept a new post of EMT 2.
- EMT 2 staff will have the opportunity to progress to Paramedic status.
- Any Technicians not wishing to take up this offer will be able to remain on band 4 and work to their existing Technician or the new EMT 1 (previously referred to as Assistant Ambulance Practitioner).
- A new two year time limited NWAS wide Meal Break Policy will be introduced for clinical staff only and include an Availability Payment. In return staff will be available to be disturbed at meal times and may be required to take their meal breaks at designated locations away from their base station. Management is also committed to improving the administration of meal breaks to minimise and ultimately avoid disturbances while crews are dining.

Depending upon the results of this ballot, NWAS will be able to move forward with its Clinical Leadership model.

### **Severe weather and Floods in Cumbria**

The Trust issued joint warning and informing information with NHS Cumbria on Wednesday 18 November.

On Thursday 19 November, 19 flood warnings for the Cumbria area were received, some severe, particularly in the Cockermouth and Keswick area, as well as road closures. Ambleside Ambulance Station had to be evacuated and precautionary measures taken at Keswick Ambulance Station. The LRF declared a major incident and a multi agency group was mobilized involving all emergency partners and organizations. Communications were lead by Cumbria Police and delivered on a partnership basis. The Trust's Deputy Chief Executive undertook several BBC interviews confirming our position and how we planned to address the situation.

Staff from the Paramedic Emergency Service across the whole region all pulled together to ensure appropriate cover was maintained in the affected areas. The HART team, along with the HART team from Yorkshire Ambulance Service, and Planned Care Service played significant roles, helping with rescues, welfare checks and evacuations. St John's Ambulance, The Red Cross and Military and Mountain Rescue teams all provided additional support.

On Friday 20 November, the Chairman, Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive travelled to Cumbria to visit some of the affected areas and recognise the commitment shown by staff and our multi agency partners who worked tirelessly together to ensure the residents of Cumbria continued to receive qualitative emergency care. The Trust joins in the tributes paid to PC Bill Barker who tragically lost his life that day.

Additional Planned Care crews from all over Cumbria were drafted in to West Cumbria over the weekend and the team worked together to play a major role in the evacuation process. Planned Care crews alone moved two thirds of

people evacuated to safety in the affected areas, particularly elderly people from nursing homes and once the areas had been declared safe, the crews helped to return people to their homes. Extra crews from Lancashire provided additional support to people in Cumbria and moved to Penrith on a temporary basis to continue with patient transport services across the rest of Cumbria.

As a result of the devastating floods in Cumbria, the Trust has put a number of measures in place to ensure that emergency cover is sufficient for local residents in the affected areas. Due to the collapse of a bridge in Workington, which acted as a major access point for local people and our services, NWS has brought in additional staff and vehicles to stations both north and south of the river.

To the North of the river the Trust has placed an additional 24 hour ambulance vehicle at both Wigton and Flimby ambulance stations. To the South of the river the Trust has placed an additional 24-hour ambulance vehicle at the station. It has also made arrangements for an additional rapid response vehicle to work in the area from Workington fire station. As an additional resource, NWS has put arrangements in place with the North West Air Ambulance and one of its helicopters is helping the Trust to respond to incidents across the river. The Trust has planned to keep the additional staff and vehicles in the areas until the temporary bridge has been put in place in Workington.

The Trust is coping extremely well with this disaster and thanks to the support of our dedicated staff and partners, it has been able to and will continue to support the people of Cumbria needing our services in affected areas and of course across the whole of the North West.

## **Conclusion**

The Trust has faced some significant challenges in terms of heightened demand for its services, meeting performance and the report received by the Care Quality Commission. However, it has put a number of things in place to combat these and is making steady progress. News of the CQC's declaration of full compliance was welcomed by the Trust and all staff have played a tremendous role in ensuring this.

The Trust is firmly committed to improvement and giving patients the right care, in the right place, at the right time and we continue to work closely with our partners to do this.

**Darren Hurrell**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

