



# REFLECTIONS.

**April 2020 to March 2021**

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# Introduction.

**This booklet reflects on North West Ambulance Service's latest year, which was the most difficult, emotional and extraordinary year the service has ever experienced.**

On the frontline and behind the scenes in corporate services, staff worked hard to ensure we could continue our response to the public safely and effectively throughout the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As well as the support we received from our staff, our North West community was crucial in helping us through what has been the most challenging year to date for the service.

On the next page, you can read about some of the actions our community took to help us through.

As we look back on 2020/21, it is also essential to reflect on the lives that have sadly been lost to the virus. Many of our colleagues have been personally affected by the pandemic and have lost loved ones, friends or family members. It is a testament to their compassion and commitment that they have continued to work to help and care for other families in need during times of such personal heartache.

Sadly we also lost much-loved colleagues. In the ambulance service we are more than colleagues, we are a family and any loss is felt right across the organisation.

We want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our friends and colleagues whose lives were lost:

**Stuart Monk**  
(1971 – 2020)

**Phil Rennie**  
(1959 – 2020)

**Peter Millington**  
(1962 – 2021)

As a lasting tribute to their memory, three vehicles have been inscribed with their names along with "Forever in our hearts".



# Our thanks to the North West community

**Our community is at the heart of everything we do. Their unwavering support throughout the last 12 months has been incredible and makes us proud to serve the North West.**

We received hundreds of donations, letters, messages and gifts, which were greatly received and helped us get through the darkest days.

Below is a small snap shot of some of the donations and messages we received from local people and businesses.

Thank you for your support throughout the challenging times.



Claire Dark

A great big Thank you to you all for every thing you do at this very difficult time you all need a medal the size of a dust bin lid thank you again and keep safe god bless you allxxx



Clair Yoxall Sutton

Thank you for everything you are doing during this tough time x You do such an amazing job x ❤️💪🏻🌈



Carol Collins

Huge respect and thank you so much for all your hard work & dedication volunteering through these trying times, it's so appreciated 💙❤️

From the bottom of my heart, and the rest of our family's, I want to say a massive thank you to Becky, Pete and North West Ambulance Service.

They saved Peter's life and we will be eternally grateful for that.

How lucky are we to have such a wonderful service such as NWAS.

Thank you for your quick response attending my husband in his hour of need. I found my husband collapsed in the bathroom of our home, he had recently been in Aintree hospital to have a biopsy of his prostate taken only a few days earlier.

Thank you so much for all you do, without you I might not have a husband. I am so proud of our NHS and these guys were a credit to you all.



We received a generous donation of supplies for three of our staff welfare vehicles in Greater Manchester courtesy of Esure. Staffed by our volunteers, the vans were stocked with treats and hot drinks to keep staff going during their busy shifts.



Bolton Kia and other sponsors including the Rotary Club of Horwich and ABC Northwest Limited, gifted our Bolton Community First Responders with a vehicle to attend emergency incidents.



YH Property Services constructed and donated a picnic bench for our staff at Blackburn station to enjoy their rest periods in the sun.



Members of the public in Sedbergh donated a Christmas tree and decorations to their local ambulance station. The generosity of the people of Cumbria helped create a festive place to call home for those who were working over Christmas.



A member of the public left boxes of chocolates on one of our patient transport ambulances in Audenshaw. The PTS team were very happy with this random act of kindness.



Wellocks in Nelson very kindly donated 120 boxes of mixed fruit to support health and wellbeing! As you can see from the smiles, they were very well received.



Preston Muslim Community donated lots of tasty Indian meals to our Broughton office. Staff left with full bellies that day!



# APRIL

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## PTS to PES



In response to the pandemic, around 150 patient transport service staff volunteered to support emergency service colleagues, helping to expand our frontline resources.

Lou, pictured, said: "It's been an honour to have been given the opportunity to work alongside so many amazing, talented emergency crews."

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## Beard Off campaign

We launched the 'Beard Off' campaign, which encouraged frontline male colleagues to consider reaching for the razor to take their beards off.

When wearing protective FFP3 facemasks, the clean-shaven look gave our people the best protection from COVID-19 as it allowed the mask to form an effective seal to the face.



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## Retirees return to the cause

We had plenty of heart-warming offers from retired members of staff who were happy to come back to work during the pandemic.

Around 35 retirees rejoined our team for a short time and got stuck right in with a variety of tasks which eased the burden on our pressured teams - it was as though they'd never left!

We are extremely thankful all of our former colleagues who returned to support us during the pandemic. The extra support they gave helped us to provide the best possible care for our patients.



# Telephone triage team

A dedicated telephone triage team helped 35% more patients to stay at home with their expert clinical advice, between February and April 2020.

During April 2020 alone, 10,616 patients received telephone self-care advice or referral to another health service.

The clinical hub, which comprises paramedics, nurses, pharmacists, mental health professionals, dispatchers and administration staff, reduced hospital attendances through our 'hear and treat' process, which lessened the pressure on frontline crews and hospitals.



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## Super switchers

60 patient transport vehicles were converted into emergency resources to support our 999 response. They were fitted with new equipment including a Mangar Elk lifting cushion, pulse oximeters, entonox, scoop stretchers, defibrillators and basic life support bags.

Not ones to shy away from a challenge, Team NWS colleagues from finance, programme management office, transformation, community engagement and many more stepped up and switched roles temporarily to help deliver the ambulances to the places they were needed most.

Thank you to our super switchers!

# MAY

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## Response to COVID-19 strengthened by 450 recruits

At the height of demand for our services, we boosted our workforce to support the region, bringing more than 450 new workers to the frontline.

Temporary training centres were set up using empty spaces in local schools to help train the new workers, which include student paramedics, apprentices, staff redeployed from other parts of the trust, and some agency workers.



## George Floyd's death

The world felt pain and sadness following the death of George Floyd in the USA on 25 May 2020. Managing Director of the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives (AACE), Martin Flaherty OBE, said George Floyd's death "must be used as a catalyst for genuine change in the fight to eradicate racism." We support the fight against racism - it has no place in North West Ambulance Service.

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# Personal 'thank you' from The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge

We received a letter of thanks from HRH, The Duke of Cambridge, expressing his sincere gratitude for the 'truly remarkable' and 'vitaly important' work that the UK's ambulance services were doing to help the nation.



In the letter, Prince William said: "The willingness of emergency service personnel to work tirelessly to protect the interests of others is a source of tremendous pride for this country."

The letter also referred to 'Our Frontline', a wellbeing service that supports the mental health of frontline workers which was launched by the Duke and Dutchess of Cambridge.



I am writing to convey Catherine and my personal thanks for the truly remarkable work that the Ambulance Services of the United Kingdom are doing, day in day out, to keep us all safe and keep the country going during these extraordinarily difficult times.

The willingness of emergency service personnel to work tirelessly to protect the interests of others is a source of tremendous pride for this country. Having spent the last few weeks speaking with members of the emergency responder community, I have heard first-hand about the challenges they are facing at the moment, but I have also been struck by their remarkable commitment and 'can do' attitude at a time like this.

I saw from my time working with the East Anglian Air Ambulance that even in normal times, emergency responders encounter distressing events on an all too frequent basis. Each day, they put not only their physical health but also their mental health at risk to help others. So in this challenging and unsettling period, it seems more important than ever for those on the frontline to know where they can turn to for information and support.

I know you take the wellbeing of your staff extremely seriously and I have heard about the helpful services provided internally to your teams, such as occupational health support and employee assistance schemes - all of which will be of vital importance as you support your staff through the weeks and months ahead.

In addition to that support, I also wanted to make you aware of *Our Frontline*. It brings together a package of support from leading mental health charities working in partnership with Police Care UK, the Ambulance Staff Charity and the Fire Fighters Charity and offers confidential support tailored to a person's need and preferences. We hope this service will complement existing provision and make a real difference in supporting the mental wellbeing of those on the frontline. I hope you will find it of interest.

If there is anything else we can do to help at this time, please do not hesitate to let us know. In the meantime, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you and all your colleagues for your work, your determination and your courage. The country owes you all an enormous debt of gratitude.



# JUNE

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## Daren Mochrie AACE Chair



Our Chief Executive Daren Mochrie was appointed Chair of the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives (AACE).

Established in 2011, AACE supports ambulance services by co-ordinating and implementing nationally agreed policies. It also provides the public with a central resource of information about NHS ambulance services.

On his appointment, Daren said he wanted to ensure that AACE speaks with one strong voice throughout his three-year term, while building relationships and networks that will increase our prominence within the health and social care system.

## Times like these



Amid the pandemic, a group of talented staff got together virtually to create a heart-warming rendition of Foo Fighters' song 'Times like these'. They sang, played instruments, edited and put the film together themselves. The video has had over 35,000 views on YouTube and featured on local TV news!

# BBC's Ambulance



The fifth series of BBC's Ambulance, filmed in Liverpool, was broadcast on BBC One in the autumn. Each episode followed the service making tough decisions and touching many lives during the busy winter months. The series brought important and heart-wrenching issues to the forefront.

Episodes averaged 4.4m viewers. But the final episode of series five had an audience of 4.9m - the highest ever audience rating for an Ambulance episode.

Following the final episode's airing, we held a Facebook Live with Ambulance stars, Tony. Mo, and Michelle who answered the public's questions. Many were keen to join the service and wanted to know what routes they needed to take to achieve that.



## COVID-19 Your Call special edition

We dedicated the summer edition of our magazine Your Call to our pandemic response.

The magazine explained our efforts during the pandemic and featured fantastic stories of resilience, bravery, courage and kindness from our staff, volunteers and the public we serve.

We encouraged readers to keep the special publication to commemorate the unique period in our history.

## Award winning clinician recognised for mental health work

Jonathan King, who leads on a mental health triage car, won the Association of Ambulance Service Chief Executive's Award at the Ambulance Leadership Forum.

Jonathan won for his tireless work assisting mental health patients by introducing the car, delivered in partnership with Mersey Care Foundation Trust.

Over 70% of patients responded to by staff using the triage car were discharged at home.



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## NHS 72nd birthday celebrations

The 72nd birthday celebrations were all about saying thank you to everybody who played a part in helping support and protect the NHS.

Staff shared their special thank you notes and videos to the people who helped them through difficult times, including colleagues, friends and families.



#ThankYouTogether



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## Armed Forces Week

During Armed Forces Week, we celebrated staff who use their skills in the military as reserves in the navy, army and air force.

The Armed Forces Flag was raised at headquarters in Bolton.

Recognised as a supporter of the cause by the forces, we give reservist staff ten paid days per year to serve.





# JULY & AUGUST

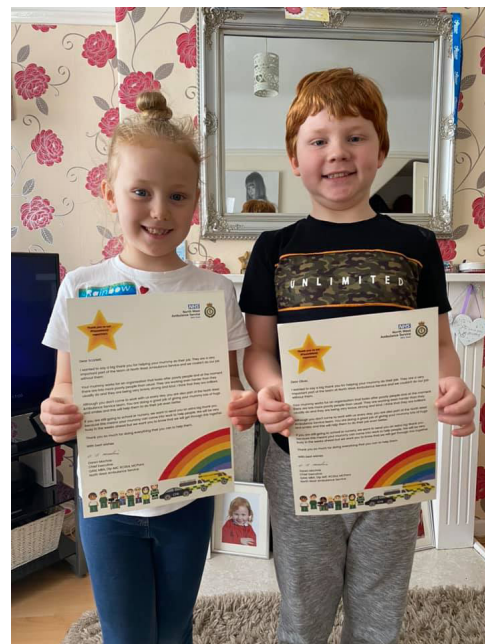
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## Thank you letters for North West children

To thank the families of our teams, we wrote personalised letters to nominated children to thank them for being a massive support to their parent or relative who works for the ambulance service.

We thanked them for being there for their parent or relative when they came home after a busy shift, told them how important their jobs are, and said how proud we are of them and their parent or relative.

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## Thank you postcards

As a small token of appreciation, our Executive Leadership Team expressed their gratitude to our people for their efforts during the pandemic. They created a thank you postcard and sent it out to the homes of all frontline workers, support role workers, students and volunteers.

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## Patient engagement surveys go digital

For the first time, our patient surveys were sent out digitally to improve accessibility. Previously, surveys had to be returned by phone or post, but now they can be completed on our website. The change has boosted response rates and means we can instantly identify themes and trends that we can share within the organisation to make changes or share examples of good practice.

# SEPTEMBER

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## NHS 111 introduces paediatricians



We introduced paediatricians into 111 to help answer a rise in calls for children. Following the first five months of the pilot, findings and feedback were collated which deemed it a success. 111 colleagues said they felt more confident knowing they had child-health experts around.

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## National Emergency Services Day

Every September we take part in the government-backed national 999 day in the United Kingdom. The day allows us to say a huge thank you to everyone who works and volunteers for the emergency services.

We held a flag-raising ceremony at our headquarters in Bolton, followed by a two-minute silence to remember colleagues we had sadly lost.

## Black History Month

To mark UK Black History Month, some of our staff shared what Black History Month meant to them.

Their case studies were shared on social media and Clinical Hub Manager Sam Griffiths took part in an Instagram takeover to discuss what it is like to be part of Team NWAS.





# OCTOBER

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## Our biggest ever flu campaign

Our army of 300 'flu busters' were kept busy helping protect staff, their loved ones and our patients against flu during winter. Using the hashtag #JabDone and UNICEF's incentive 'Get A Jab, Give A Jab' campaign, staff could donate a

vaccination to a child in need when they had their own done. The team visited stations, offices and call centres to give the jabs. An incredible 78.3% of staff received the vaccinations – the highest ever uptake we have recorded.

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## Speak up

October was Freedom To Speak Up (FTSU) month – an opportunity to reflect on the importance of speaking up and the options available to us to do this. Speaking up about a problem at work is essential, because it helps us improve our services and working environments. Our FTSU champions are ambassadors for the cause and are available for our people to contact about any concerns.

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## Patient and Public Panel

On the first anniversary of its launch, we celebrated 143 members of our Patient and Public Panel.

The panel gives the public a voice and the chance to have their views acted upon.

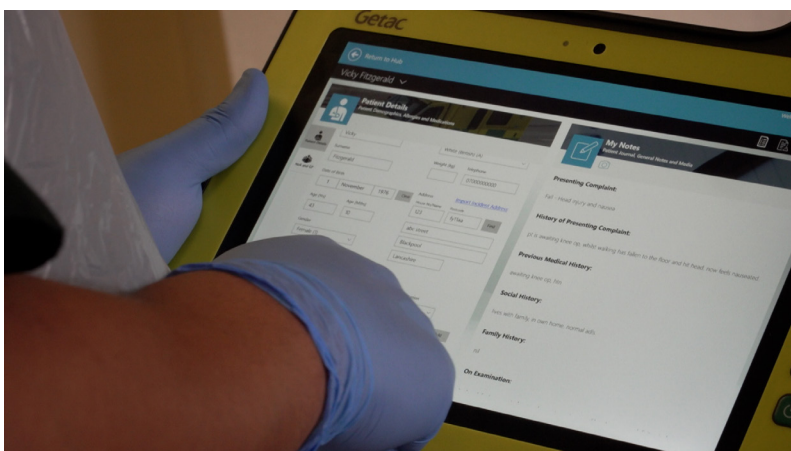
Despite challenges from the pandemic, the panel continued to thrive, with members supporting our work virtually and participating in 26 involvement opportunities throughout the 2020/21 year.

Activities included regular attendance at our learning forums, sharing feedback on the launch of NHS 111 First, and contributions towards our values and branding refresh.

Panel members even supported a mystery-shopper style activity with our patient transport service.

NHS England hosted a focus group session with our panel members on non-emergency patient transport service eligibility criteria.

# NOVEMBER



## EPR roll out

One of our most significant new digital systems went live in Lancashire. The Electronic Patient Record (EPR) was first piloted in the Fylde and meant our clinicians moves from paper-based patient record forms to the new EPR. Initial feedback from the first phase of the rollout was positive, with clinicians reporting it has made hospital handovers faster and easier.

## Minister of State for Health thanks ambulance services

Minister of State for Health, Edward Argar MP, sent a letter of thanks to the entire ambulance workforce for its outstanding efforts over the year. The letter praised our staff for their commitment and determination throughout the challenging time. It recognised the lengths to which staff went, taking on new roles and adapting current positions to serve the North West community best.

## Comms Team win COVID Award

CorpComms Magazine named our employee communication strategy winner in the 'most effective essential worker communications' category at a virtual ceremony.

The awards were designed to recognise and record the amazing work that communicators achieved under the most challenging circumstances.



# Senior paramedic chosen to represent UK ambulance services

Senior Paramedic Team Leader Dominic Gethin attended the Sunday commemoration in London on behalf of all UK ambulance services. He, along with members of the Armed Forces, formed a guard of honour around the Cenotaph as Her Majesty the Queen, the Prime Minister and other dignitaries lay wreaths in remembrance of those who have given their lives in battle.



## The first Veteran Aware ambulance service

We became the first ambulance service in the UK to be awarded the Veteran Aware accreditation from the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA). This is a real honour for us and demonstrates our close working with the Armed Forces community.

## NHS Parliamentary Awards

On the first time of entering, we had two North West regional winners of NHS Parliamentary Awards.

Local MPs submitted five entries on our behalf, so to be chosen as regional winners for two was a testament to the high calibre of nominations.

Just 70 out of a total of 700 nominations put forward were shortlisted.

Our winners were Lancaster ambulance crew Mark Wiley and Hayley Duxbury, who won the Care and Compassion Award, and the East Lancashire Fall Response Service, which won the Excellence in Urgent and Emergency Care Award.

# Ambulance trust of the year

We won the coveted Ambulance Trust of the Year Award at the annual Health Business Awards 2020.

The judges were particularly impressed with our East Lancashire Falls Response Service Team, which sees a paramedic and an occupational therapist respond to patients who have fallen and treat them at home.

The partnership between East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust and us saw 83% of patients (almost 5,000) treated at home by the team. It was crucial during the first wave of the pandemic to relieve the burden on hospitals.



## Community Resuscitation Training Officer wins at the Inspire Women Awards

Jo Thwaites won the She Inspires Award for the Health and Social Care category at the Inspire Women Awards. A friend nominated Jo for all the work she has done both for NWAS and her community.

Due to social distancing restrictions, Jo wasn't able to receive her award until spring this year which Emmerdale star Kelvin Fletcher presented.

## From colleagues to friends



**Suzie Simonds**  
Emergency Medical Technician 2

At the beginning of October, Suzie unfortunately caught COVID-19 and became really ill. She woke one morning unable to walk properly, a temperature of 39.2, breathing difficulties and unable to speak.

"I've only worked with Rachel since April and she has become more a friend than a colleague, we make a great team! Her support has really helped because catching COVID-19 was absolutely awful and was one of the worst times of my life."



**Chris Whitehorn**  
Emergency Medical Technician 1

In March, during the initial wave of the pandemic, Chris unfortunately caught COVID-19 resulting in a seven week hospital stay, being given his last rites and his family thinking he might not come home.

"My team are my support system. The support I have had from managers has been absolutely amazing. Not just my immediate managers but from managers from throughout the service who I am quite friendly with. But the managers at Toxteth, Andy Patton and Mike Quirk have really looked after me and helped me get back to where I am now."

We launched an internal campaign, 'what does your colleague mean to you?' which saw staff sharing stories about contracting the virus and how their colleagues helped them through. The campaign aimed to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading and reminded staff of the importance of following infection prevention control procedures.



# DECEMBER

## NHS 111 First launches



In winter, the NHS 111 First initiative launched, confirming 111's place as the 'first line of defence' for urgent and emergency health care.

This meant that people could call NHS 111 to book an appointment at A&E or get an urgent appointment at an alternative health service.

The NHS 111 First campaign encourages people to call NHS 111 before going to hospital.

Ahead of the launch, we upgraded our telephony infrastructure. The multi-million pound project standardised systems and involved many of our vital support service teams including IT and Programme Management Office.

## Blackpool Tower lights up for us

Blackpool's most historic landmark lit up green in honour of our service.

On 22 December, the tower glowed in glorious green all evening to represent our uniform, along with the message "Thank You NWAS".

The tribute was organised in conjunction with Blackpool Council to show support to our staff and volunteers, along with family and friends who have been behind us throughout the pandemic.





# JANUARY

## Inside 999

Social media campaign #Inside999 aimed to educate the public during a prolonged period of increased 999 calls. A new approach was needed to help the public understand we were busy without affecting public confidence in our services.

We shared stories from colleagues about responding on the frontline during the pandemic with support information for the public.

Activity statistics were shared along with video messages from staff and managers giving behind the scenes insight.

## New pin badge for EOC life savers

A new recognition scheme launched to award EOC staff with a branded badge and certificate when they help a patient survive a cardiac arrest. To receive a badge and certificate, staff must have taken an active role in helping the patient, whether that is providing reassurance, quality CPR advice or ensuring the right resources are dispatched in a timely manner.



## Community Calendar

At the start of 2021, we released our annual community calendar. This year's calendar was dedicated to our North West community of more than 7 million people.

We wanted to thank them for their unwavering support. The hundreds of donations, letters, gifts, and messages mentioned in the calendar were greatly received and helped us get through the darkest days.



# COVID-19 vaccination hub



Following the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines, our Broughton site became a vaccination centre for all staff. The vaccination hub opened in January and closed at the end of April with help from hundreds of volunteers. Almost 4,000 vaccines were administered - a brilliant uptake.

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## Race Equality Network launch

At the start of 2021, we launched our first ever Race Equality Network which is chaired by Paramedic Wesley Proverbs.

Since its launch, the network has met with various teams across the trust and our patient and public panel to explore ways in which the network can improve staff experiences.

The network was set up to support staff from ethnic minority backgrounds and to ensure their voice is heard.

It hopes to encourage conversations about race and race equality, to improve ethnic minority representation within the trust, to support members, influence policy and provide guidance to all staff.



# FEBRUARY

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## Army collaboration

Following a rise in demand and strain on our service, the military was drafted in to help support the healthcare system in the North West.

Around 120 military personnel, including some from the Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment (QOGLR), were trained and deployed across the region.

They carried out more than 1,900 PTS journeys and were deployed to more than 4,600 incidents, including 1,700 healthcare professional/inter-facility transfers.

Their support and commitment was impeccable.

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## The first NHS carbon literate organisation

We became the first NHS trust to be officially recognised as a 'carbon literate' organisation, showing our commitment to improving sustainability in the healthcare sector.

We have a bronze-level accreditation as a Carbon Literate Organisation, following our Carbon Literacy Project (CLP) work.

The award is a significant landmark for our Sustainability Team.

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## LGBT History Month

Like many events this year, our celebrations for LGBT History Month all had to be virtual. However, that did not stop the network and the rest of the trust from supporting this annual event.

Staff shared their experiences and told us who their LGBT icons were. Icons included Cher, Billie Jean King, David Bowie, Freddie Mercury and Bayard Rustin.



# MARCH

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## Body worn cameras introduced

Staff took part in a body-worn camera pilot funded by NHS England and Improvement.

Just six weeks into the pilot, the cameras were found to prevent aggressive behaviour from the public, often with just the threat of activation.

Keeping our staff safe is a priority for us and this is a huge step towards reducing violence and aggression against them.

Not only will this aid in prosecutions of offenders but it is hoped to help de-escalate situations and avoid attacks from even taking place.

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## Transporting dogs safely

We introduced new guidance on transporting assistance dogs. This is the first time that we have had official guidance on how to transport assistance dogs safely on our vehicles and recognises the critical role they provide in giving support to their owners – especially at times of crisis.

We hope this guidance will help to ease some of those concerns for assistance dog owners, especially during an emergency.



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This information can be made available in alternative formats, such as easy read or large print and may be available in alternative languages upon request.

## **HOW TO CONTACT US:**

Tel: 0345 112 0 999

Email: [nwasenquiries@nwas.nhs.uk](mailto:nwasenquiries@nwas.nhs.uk)

**[nwas.nhs.uk](https://nwas.nhs.uk)**

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