

YOUR CALL.



BBC Radio presenter Nayha Ahmad on inclusion and diversity.



**Celebrating a
50-year-career
in the ambulance
service.**



**Why falls
prevention
matters
this
winter.**



Welcome

TO THE LATEST EDITION OF YOUR CALL.

We've had such good feedback from you on our magazine that we have committed to bringing you four editions per year (April to March). We hope you enjoy the penultimate edition for 23/24 - it is packed full of interesting stories.

This issue has been inspired by both autumn and winter - as cosy thoughts of hot chocolate and log fires enter our heads. We look at the more serious side of autumn and how fireworks can cause life-changing injuries (warning - this is on pages 10 and 11 and there is a picture that some may find disturbing). We also talk about how we plan for winter as early as August - ultimately, it's the busiest season for our services.

With falls being one of the top reasons for 999 calls to us last winter, we speak to Community Specialist Paramedic Sara Harris about the simple steps you can take to prevent falls around the home.

We also catch up with BBC Radio presenter Nayha Ahmad, fresh from her role presenting our prestigious Star Awards. She chats about why inclusion and diversity are so important to her as a British Asian woman working in the media.

Can you imagine serving 50 years in your chosen profession? This is exactly what Keith has done, he talks to us about his impressive milestone achievement within the ambulance service.

There are lots more stories inside designed to inspire and educate, we hope you enjoy it!

YOUR CALL MAGAZINE TEAM

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE WITH US?

If so, please get in touch by emailing:
communications@nwas.nhs.uk.

Also in this issue...

PARAMEDIC RACHEL IS USING HER SKILLS TO AID UKRAINIAN SOLDIERS

Getting an insight into what it's like to be an army reservist.

WE REMEMBER OUR WAR HEROES

A member of the team shares her grandfather's story and why it's so important to remember those who fought for us.

WE SHARE TIPS ON HOW TO GET A HEALTHIER SLEEP THIS WINTER.

Your mood and health may be affected by less daylight hours during the upcoming colder months as we provide tips on how to get a good night's rest.

BACK TO THE FLOOR.

Our leaders partner up with our frontline staff to find out the challenges they face.



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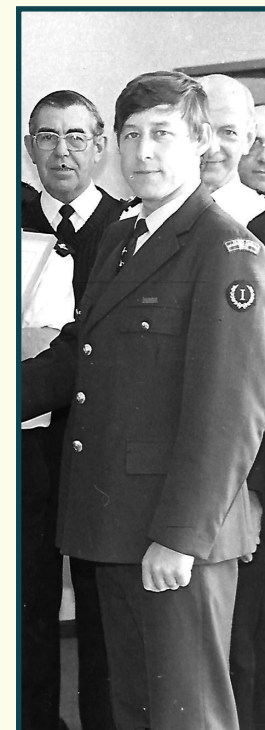
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Honouring an inspirational 50-year-career.

It's our people who make us who we are at Nwas, and nobody encompasses that more than 74-year-old Keith Ramage, who was this year recognised for an outstanding 50 years' service.



Starting his career working overseas in the Armed Forces, proud Mancunian Keith relocated back to his hometown town aged 22 to start a new career with the ambulance service, which was a lot different back then to the service we have today.

Keith joined Stockport Fire and Ambulance Service as an ambulanceman in 1972 with a starting wage of 47p per hour. Being a natural leader, Keith progressed to become a staff trainer and by 1980 was a leading ambulanceman.

As the service began to develop, Keith became one of the first paramedics but with limited funding and basic resources available he undertook training for this in his own time. Recognising that more could be done for patients before they arrive at hospital, Keith became instrumental in fighting for advanced equipment and training. Together with his team, he fundraised for lifesaving defibrillators, even getting local celebrities on board to drum up support. Keith said:

"Joining the ambulance service was more of a calling for me than a job, I wanted to give something back. It's an honour to be able to help people in crisis situations as well as knowing that many lives have been saved thanks to the equipment and training that we fought for back then."

Keith kept up with his army roots and became a sergeant for the Territorial Army alongside his work for the ambulance service. After a health scare in 1990, he moved over to our patient transport service (PTS)



where his career continued to flourish, becoming a PTS manager in 2000.

In 2002, Keith decided his heart lay in a patient-facing role and went back on the road as a PTS care assistant where he has worked together with his long-standing crewmate and friend, Dale Land, ever since.

Father of two, grandfather of seven, and great-grandfather of two, Keith lives with his wife Carmen in Manchester and has a keen interest in flying and DIY - although this once led to an incident with a saw where he accidentally sliced off his right thumb! Thankfully the thumb was successfully saved but with limited mobility. Showing no signs of slowing down, Keith is now looking forward to experiencing a Boeing 747 flight simulation in February.

Keith was awarded his 50 years' service recognition by our Chairman and Chief Executive at the Greater Manchester Long Service Awards in September, receiving a standing ovation from his colleagues.

Congratulations Keith and thank you for your incredible service!



“Unless discriminating behaviour is called out, things will never change.”

Nayha Ahmad is a radio and TV presenter who currently hosts the Official Asian Chart show on the BBC Asian Network and the Sky Arts show ‘Unmuted’ and ‘Desi Beat’ on Colors TV, Sky.

In September this year, she hosted our Star Awards ceremony, the biggest celebratory night of the year for our staff in which we recognise their outstanding achievements. She talks to us about how she felt being asked to present the event. She also talks about why inclusion and diversity are so important to her as a British Asian woman working in the media.

“When I was asked to host the Team Nwas Star Awards, I was thrilled. Everyone knows about Nwas from the BBC series Ambulance. Meeting staff from the service was amazing, everyone was so friendly. I loved seeing the video clips of staff in their uniform on the night and then seeing them glammed up at the same time was so lovely.

“When the NHS 111 team got up on stage after winning the team award, I loved it. It made me want to be a part of their team! I’d chatted to a few staff from 111 at the start of the evening before the ceremony and they gave me a bit of a behind-the-scenes insight, and it was great to see them win.”

Nayha is no stranger to having to use the ambulance service and knows how vital our services are: “Living in Buckinghamshire our local ambulance service is South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS). My dad had a mini-stroke a few months back and the paramedics from SCAS came out to him. They were so helpful and really accommodating to my dad’s needs. I am not sure where we would be without them.”

Turning her attention to growing up and the struggles she faced breaking into her industry, she says: “I was always the chatty one at school, always talking, dancing and performing and being dramatic. Naturally, I did a

performing arts degree but after graduating, being British Asian, I struggled to get into acting. So, I worked on community radio for the next six years where I learned my skills and all about radio.

“Along the way, I had some discriminative moments like when I went for a demo with a well-known radio station. The manager assumed I was there for their urban station and not their mainstream station. He said he didn’t realise I spoke the way I did, he called it ‘posh’ – I am not. So, he made assumptions about me based on my ethnicity.

“I never gave up or let small minds stand in my way. I got my first radio gig during the pandemic and continued with my voiceovers, YouTube videos amongst other media-related focuses. In March 2021, I was offered the Official Asian Chart Show job on BBC Asian Network. With Asian ethnic groups making up the second largest percentage of the population (9.3%) of England and Wales* it is a big gig for me.

“As a British Asian woman, diversity and inclusion are imperative to me. I have had a difficult time breaking into my industry as I have been told ‘I am not ‘Asian’ enough’ for some roles because I am Westernised and then in other roles, I have not been right either. I found myself struggling with where to fit in, as have my black peer presenters.

“The only role models I saw on TV growing up were Konnie Huq and Jameela Jamil. Some mainstream South Asian presenters don’t talk about their heritage, so, I always wondered growing up, do I talk about it or not? Of course, I should have.

“Now, being in the public eye, I get a lot of Asian people asking me how to navigate this line of industry. I always tell them if you work hard, and don’t use race as a barrier then you will succeed.

“I would not accept discrimination now. I am the first to call out any form of prejudice, whether it is racism, sexism, or ageism as I want things to change. Unless discrimination, intentional or unintentional, is called out, things will never change. I want to challenge old and outdated thinking.

“Being open to learning about new cultures is a way to connect to new people. Some people don’t drink, some people don’t eat meat, and some people pray at certain times of the day, it is so interesting to learn about.

“I used to be scared to ask questions about other people’s cultures but asking helps educate and helps understanding and builds relationships. I believe there is a way to ask, don’t assume. Equally, if somebody asks and they get it wrong, don’t bash them as this is how you shut people down and things won’t change.”

*2021 Census



“Some mainstream South Asian presenters don’t talk about their heritage, so, I always wondered growing up, do I talk about it or not? Of course, I should have.”





PARAMEDIC RACHEL IS USING HER SKILLS TO AID UKRAINIAN SOLDIERS.

Paramedic Rachel Lemonofides joined Team NWAS in 2003 and over the last 20 years, has developed her skillset and progressed to paramedic status. Feeling the need to challenge herself further, in 2014, Rachel decided to join the Army Reserves. Now, she has undertaken her first four-month deployment. Here she gives Your Call an insight into what it's like to be an army reservist.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the government has increased its support to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, including delivering training to Ukrainian service personnel all over the UK. Rachel has been selected due to her specific skills to bolster the workforce required to deliver that training. Rachel said, "I am a staff sergeant in 335 Medical Evacuation Regiment so my role in this deployment will be to provide real-time medical cover in the primary care health centre as well as during combat training to all the Ukrainian troops, and to help the army medics develop their skills."

Prior to starting her deployment though, there was a two-week period of training which included refreshing her combat skills, a medic course and a rigorous fitness test that all reservists must undertake despite their role or responsibilities. Rachel explained, "Being an army

reservist is hard. To stay in physical shape is a challenge. We get fitness tested like the regulars do so in preparation for this deployment, I have been training daily for two months. It's rigorous fitness testing and there are sacrifices you have to make to be in the reserves."

Despite the challenges, Rachel does enjoy being a reservist and would recommend it. She said, "The experience you get from being a reservist is something you can't get anywhere else. Over the last nine years, I have been to Canada, America, Germany and France taking part in adventure training and other activities and met so many different people from across the world who I never would have met if it weren't for the reserves. But I do know, being in the reserves isn't for everyone. You need supportive friends and family around you, and it helps if the organisation you work for is on board. Luckily for me, NWAS is a member of the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme and with the Armed Forces Policy we have, NWAS is fully supportive of my deployment."

Supporting all our armed forces personnel and their families is a priority for us and to help us deliver this, last year we launched our Armed Forces Network. Rachel said, "Having the Armed Forces Network is a great way of promoting a better understanding of the Armed Forces Community and since the network's launch, there is definitely more awareness amongst staff."



Since joining us in 2008, Infection Prevention Control Practitioner Kris Fairhurst has had a successful career undertaking various roles in the ambulance service, including completing a degree in paramedic science, something he didn't think would be possible after leaving school with minimal qualifications.

Kris found school challenging and whilst resitting his English and Maths GCSEs at college, was diagnosed with dyslexia. Dyslexia is a common learning difficulty that mainly causes problems with reading, writing, and spelling.

Kris said: "When I got the diagnosis, it suddenly made so much sense to me. I always struggled with reading and writing but I didn't know why. With not understanding the work in classes my concentration would lapse and my mind would wander. My college tutor helped me understand my own learning style and find ways to overcome the challenges I faced."

After leaving college, Kris continued his studies and became a Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons registered veterinary nurse where he found a passion for medicine and went on to join Team NWAS as a student paramedic at the age of 28.

Kris continues: "I initially didn't tell my colleagues about my dyslexia as I felt ashamed and was worried that I'd be judged but when studying for my degree, I opened up about it which meant that I could access the additional assistance I needed. I'm glad I did as everyone was really accepting and supportive."

"The day I graduated was a really proud moment for me and something that I never thought I would be able to achieve."

After qualifying as a paramedic, Kris was later encouraged by his operations manager and his mentor to apply for the development role as senior paramedic team leader where he was responsible for leading a team of 15 paramedics and emergency medical technicians and gained additional clinical skills.

During the pandemic, Kris supported his team in Burnley by ensuring the sector was compliant with all infection control and COVID-19 procedures. He became passionate about this and took on a corporate role working in our Infection Prevention and Control Team.

Kris said: "My current role involves a lot more reading and writing but I don't let my dyslexia hold me back, my manager Julie is really supportive and patient with me, which really helps. NWAS is always improving and growing, and it feels great to be a part of that."

"I'd encourage anyone with dyslexia thinking about a career with the ambulance service to go for it, if I can do it so can you!"



NWAS, as seen on TV.



You'd think we would be used to being on the telly by now, with five series of the BBC's award winning 'Ambulance' under our belt but that doesn't mean it still isn't a challenge!



When you are watching our amazing staff's care and compassion towards our patients, commenting on social media and enjoying a brew, you are watching the result of months of planning, discussions, meetings and...well, sheer hard graft!

While we at NWAS know the production team Dragonfly extremely well by now, that doesn't mean we just open our doors and leave them to it. There are many things we have to consider and prepare for to make a successful series.

Series 11 has just come to an end and we are eagerly waiting for series 12. This year, for the first time, the camera crew joined our teams in Cumbria, as well as Lancashire and Greater Manchester, and as always, we watched them with pride.

We were first approached (again) by Dragonfly early in 2022 and in August that year, the project got the green (or should that be blue) light from our Board of Directors. From then on, it was all systems go for our Communications Team who had the mammoth task of working with operations to pull it all together.

Head of Communications and Engagement Julie Treharne comments:

"Working on a documentary series is exciting but challenging. As well as the logistics such as fitting out the vehicles with cameras and organising the research shifts with camera crews, we also have to ensure our partners are on board. Before the filming starts, we discuss what we are doing with local councils, our NHS partners and other agencies to make sure that everyone is aware and how it might impact the services they provide.

"While the Communications team is ultimately responsible for over seeing the project, it wouldn't happen at all without the support of colleagues in operations, our call centres, fleet, finance, legal and HR.

All the hard work paid off, with viewing figures for series 11 averaging 2.49m viewers per episode, which is great news for Dragonfly and the BBC. For NWAS, the ultimate goal is to showcase the complex work we do, the difficult decisions our staff have to make – sometimes in seconds, the challenges we face and of course, to attract the staff of the future!

Kayley Booth, Duty Control Manager, Lancashire Emergency Operations Centre:

"It was strange to see myself in work mode – I was in Tunisia at the time it aired so watched it on catch up. Friends didn't really realise what I actually do as part of my role!

"Dragonfly were great people, very down to earth, Emily even made us a cake which was to die for! When major incident stand by was declared, poor Dan the camera man didn't know what to do with himself but it was good for him to see what we deal with on a regular basis."



Mandy McFarlane, Paramedic, Lancashire:

"I enjoyed working with Dragonfly, we had Tom the very talented cameraman with us for four 12 hour shifts, he worked hard to make us feel comfortable being filmed. After a while we almost forgot the camera was there and we just got on with the job.

"My family and friends all say they are very proud of me and that it's a great way to finish my career as I'm retiring at the end of November. I've been with NWAS for 20 years and 40 years with the NHS.

"I suppose if I miss the job I can always watch an episode on catch up."



FROM FUN TO AN EMERGENCY:

Bonfire Night is a time for getting together with the family and enjoying the festivities. Whilst it can be a great night for many, for us, it can mean we see an increase in people needing emergency medical help for serious injuries. Over the past two years alone, we've responded to over 85 firework-related incidents, that likely could have been avoided.



We talked to Craig Eaton, Emergency Medical Technician, and Chris Hardy, Patient Transport Ambulance Care Assistant, about their near-miss experience with fireworks a few years back which has made them reconsider having home fireworks.

The pair, who are partners, had a small firework display in their garden, and after Craig

lit one of the fireworks it fell over, injuring Chris on his thigh and shooting towards their home. Chris says:

"Accidents can happen to anyone and because we were younger, we thought that it wouldn't happen to us. My injuries were painful with bruising, but fortunately not severe.

"We would encourage people to go to organised firework displays to take the risk out of them. At the end of the day, they are unsafe because they contain explosives that can cause serious harm if mishandled – we know first-hand."

If you, or someone you are with gets burned by a firework, act quickly:

- Stop the burning process as soon as possible. This may mean removing the person from the area, dousing flames with water, or smothering flames with a blanket. Do not put yourself at risk of getting burnt as well.
- Remove any clothing or jewellery near the burnt area of skin. But do not try to remove anything that's stuck to the burnt skin, as this could cause more damage.
- Cool the burn with cool or lukewarm running water for 20 minutes as soon as possible after the injury. Never use ice, iced water, or any creams or greasy substances like butter.
- Keep yourself or the person warm. Use a blanket or layers of clothing but avoid putting them on the injured area. Keeping warm will prevent hypothermia, where a person's body temperature drops below 35C (95F). This is a risk if you're cooling a large burnt area, particularly in young children and elderly people.
- Cover the burn with cling film. Lay the cling film over the burn, rather than wrapping it around a limb. A clean, clear plastic bag can be used for burns on your hand.
- Raise the affected area, if possible. This will help to reduce swelling.

Firework burns and their impact.

In a similar story, Adam, a member of the public, shares his experience with fireworks when he was younger, and sadly he was not as lucky as Chris as he ended up with horrific injuries. Rewind ten years, Adam bought fireworks for Bonfire Night. Unfortunately, one rocket exploded immediately when he lit it, causing serious injuries to his face and hand.

Adam says: "At the time I screamed for my partner to get the children inside. I didn't realise the extent of the injury until I ran inside when my partner called an ambulance. I experienced instant pain, excessive skin loss, blood loss, burns to my face and neck and even my hair was burnt. Due to the pain in my hand, I hadn't realised I had burns to my face, I think closing my eyes naturally at the time of the explosion probably saved my eyesight."

Adam had to go through two long surgeries and almost lost his dream of being a soldier. But he didn't give up. With hard work and therapy, he regained strength and continued in his lifelong dream of being a soldier.

"My recovery was long, very painful, and challenging. I wanted to return to my role as a soldier and I felt my life was dependent on this.



"The burns healed, my hand healed, but I have never bought fireworks for a home display since and won't again."

Fireworks cause burns when they touch your skin or if their heat and embers reach you. The severity depends on the firework type, proximity, and exposure duration.



Call 999 if you or someone you know has:

- large or deep burns – any burn bigger than the injured person's hand
- burns that cause white or charred skin – any size
- burns on the face, neck, hands, feet, any joints, or genitals.

People at greater risk from the effects of burns, such as children under 10 years old, should also get medical attention after a burn or scald.

Call 111 or visit 111 online for non-emergency-type burns or scalds.

How I became smoke free.



Becky Dennis, Support Centre Advisor, and her husband both used to smoke 20 cigarettes a day to help cope with the stresses of everyday life. When they found out they were pregnant in February 2020, they decided to cut the habit completely. Becky openly talks about their fight not to start smoking again, despite the tragedy they experienced, and how being smoke-free has improved both their lives.

Becky said: "I found out I was pregnant with my first baby and quit smoking on 29 February 2020. Obviously, this was the year of the pandemic, so things went a bit crazy, and we went into lockdown on 23 March. On that day my husband and I found out that we had suffered a missed miscarriage."

Distraught, Becky and her husband both contemplated starting smoking again to cope with their tragedy. Becky explained: "We very seriously considered starting smoking again to help deal with the heartbreak that came with our loss, as well as the alien situation of being in lockdown. But after several failed attempts at quitting over the years, we decided that we wouldn't undo the last month of good work."

But this decision was not an easy one, staying smoke-free was a challenge. Becky said:

"The first month without them was the hardest. A big challenge was breaking the habit of smoking at certain times of day; with a coffee, a break at work or a night out – but this all got easier every day that passed. Once we knew we knew we could manage our stress/life without cigarettes we didn't look back. The NHS Stop Smoking app really helped us quit, it monitored our journey and motivated us to carry on."

Feeling happy and healthier, Becky and her husband decided to take up running to improve their health further. She said:

"We completed the couch to 5k, moved on to 10k runs and my husband went even further and ran two half marathons, raising over £2000 for Tommy's – a baby loss charity. He has signed up for his first marathon next year to raise money for a local charity and to put his healthier lungs/lifestyle to good use."

Becky's decision to remain smoke-free paid off. Just over a year later, they started the family they had always wanted. Becky added: "We went on to have our little girl 17 months later and I am currently eight months pregnant with our second baby. We have been stopped for 1281 days and have saved over £12,000 each!"

If you require help to stop smoking, try the NHS stop smoking app



Kairen Smith, Positive Action Officer, unfortunately never got to meet her grandfather. He was tragically killed in World War II at the age of 23. But his legacy lives on through Kairen, as it was him who inspired her to get involved in NWAS' Armed Forces Network. Today, she shares her grandfather's story and tells us why remembering all those who fought for our country is so important.

Kairen said, "My grandfather, William Mitton, Warrant Office, joined the RAF at the age of 18 and served as a wireless operator/gunner with 103 Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, during the Second World War. The wireless operator transmitted all messages to and from the aircraft to their base. He also served as the reserve gunner. If the aircraft got into difficulties, it was his role to send out positional signals. If the aircraft had to ditch into the sea, he had to stay in the aircraft to send out signals to improve the crew's chance of being located and rescued."

Sadly, just five years after signing up, William was killed in action. Kairen said, "He was a crew member of an Avro Lancaster bomber, which following an attack on Berlin was shot down by a German night fighter pilot, crashing into the sea near Texel, Holland. He was one of two crew members whose bodies were never discovered. My mother, an only child, was just four years old when he died. He is remembered with honour at Runnymede Memorial in Surrey."

Talking of remembering, Kairen tells us why Remembrance Day is an important occasion for her family.

REMEMBERING OUR WAR HEROES.

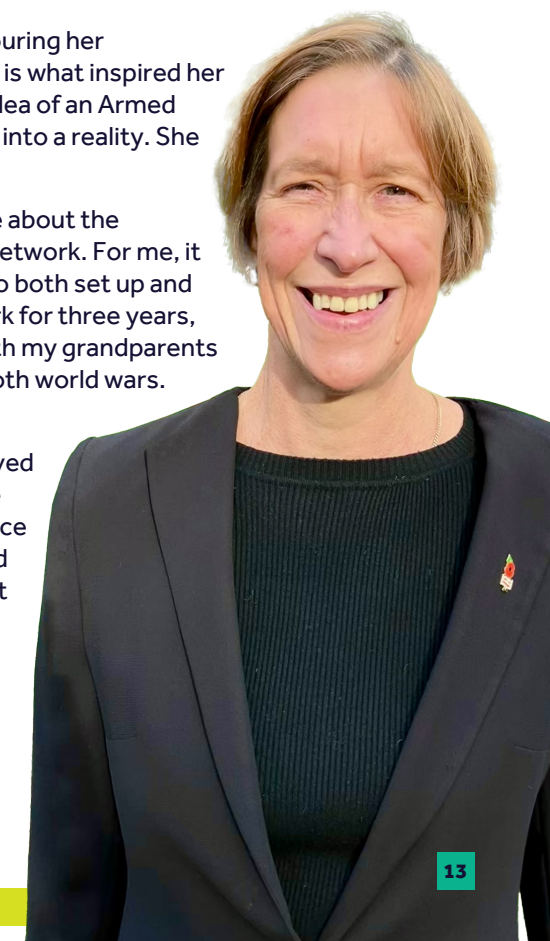
"Remembrance Day is important to us to remember all who have died fighting for their country, and those who continue to make sacrifices for our nation. It is important that those who died should never be forgotten. "Lest We Forget!". On Remembrance Day, we attend our local church service to remember and join the parade, to join with the community at a service at the cenotaph, and observe the two-minute silence."

For Kairen, honouring her late grandfather is what inspired her to turn NWAS' idea of an Armed Forces Network into a reality. She explained:

"I am passionate about the Armed Forces Network. For me, it was an honour to both set up and chair the network for three years, especially as both my grandparents served during both world wars."

"My paternal grandfather served as a medic in the ambulance service in the First World War, including at the Somme and Passchendaele."

"I continue to be an ally to the network and am proud to do so."



Working together to be here for you this winter.

With the dark evenings setting in and winter fast approaching, many of us might be thinking about how we can prepare for the colder weather by stocking up on some medicine cupboard essentials and booking in for flu and COVID vaccinations.

Here at NWSA though, we start preparing for winter in August. It's our Resilience Team who are responsible for putting plans in place to make sure we can still deliver the service our communities need despite additional pressures or adverse weather conditions.

The team prepares for additional activity between October and April with a particular focus on the festive period to make sure we've got enough resources to manage anticipated demand.

Head of Contingency Planning Joanne Hodson said: "Winter creates challenges for the entire health economy. Last year saw infectious disease rates remaining high, industrial action across public service organisations and capacity constraints across the system. This year it is prudent to plan for the same and it's important we do so with the resources we have available."

The team works together with our partners such as Integrated Care Boards, NHS England, UK Health Security Agency and voluntary agencies to gain and share information that helps them to risk assess and plan.

Joanne continues: "Our existing relationships with other agencies are vital when it comes to planning."

We know that the weather affects us in lots of ways, it's not just a possible increase in patients but it could cause a reduction in available staff across all agencies. We are one big system so we must work together to get a positive result."

To strengthen our workforce, 75 new paramedics and 32 emergency medical technicians will have joined the team by Christmas, with more due to be in post by March 2024. There will be 72 new recruits for the Patient Transport Service and 250 new call handlers for the 999 and NHS 111 contact centres.

We're also increasing the number of clinicians working in our 999 contact centres. They help get patients the right care for their needs by providing healthcare advice over the phone or making referrals to an alternative health or care service in the community.

An additional 32 emergency ambulances will be operational to respond to patients by February, increasing the number of emergency ambulances in our fleet to 553.

We will also continue to work closely with local hospitals to help reduce the amount of time ambulances spend waiting to handover patients, allowing vehicles and crews to be free to respond to the next emergency.

Planning for winter doesn't end when the cold weather sets in, the team works closely with our ICT department to analyse data trends and constantly monitor spikes in activity to put in place contingencies as and when required.

Making sure we're here you when you need us most this winter is a whole team effort.



How to get healthier sleep.



Winter for some means warming fires, snug sweaters, and hot chocolate, it also means long, dark evenings. As we move further into the cold season, your mood and health may be affected by less daylight hours and colder weather which can be difficult if you have trouble sleeping. Winter fatigue is a common, but seasonal affective disorder (SAD) includes more than just the "winter blues" as both your sleep and your daily life are impacted. Poor sleep can negatively impact someone's health in numerous ways if it is not appropriately controlled.

In the UK, it's estimated that two million people suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Mental health is equally like physical health; we need to be aware of both so here are some helpful hints and techniques that can help reduce and ease these symptoms.

Yoga Nidra

The name may be deceptive, but Yoga Nidra is non-physical in terms of movement and thought of as a guided body relaxation that allows you to leave your fight or flight mode and enter a deeply calm state. It helps to reset the nervous system and has numerous advantages, including reducing stress, improving memory, sleep and physical health, and also helping to diminish symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Fearne Cotton speaks about her daily practices openly, and how it leaves her feeling rejuvenated, awake and leaves you feeling like you have slept for a long time, even if it's only a short 20-minute practice. As a result, it's an excellent aid for the many people who deal with insomnia's consequences.



Being mindful through movement

Exercise can enhance your sleep and minimise the symptoms of sleep disorders while also reducing stress. It also relieves tension, boosts physical and mental energy, and enhances well-being through the release of endorphins.

Anything that gets you moving can help, but you'll get a bigger benefit if you pay attention instead of zoning out. Try to notice the sensation of your feet hitting the ground, for example, or the rhythm of your breathing, or the feeling of the wind on your skin. By adding this mindfulness element - really focusing on your body and how it feels as you exercise - you'll not only improve your physical condition faster, but you may also be able to interrupt the flow of constant worries running through your head.

Please note, exercise is not something everybody can participate in, we suggest you seek advice from your GP before starting any form of exercise.

Try not to panic if you can't sleep

It's important to appreciate why we sleep: to rest and repair our mind and body. It's vital for good physical and mental health and wellbeing. However, forcing yourself to sleep never works. If you find you can't sleep, it is easy to get worked up, but it is important to remember everyone has good nights and bad nights.

Your sleep routine starts before you get into bed, so build in time every evening to relax before you go to sleep, helping your brain to switch off when it is bedtime. This involves 'sleep hygiene' strategies, and 'games' that help settle the mind when it can't switch off at night. The following may help; setting a regular wake time and bedtime, avoiding clock watching, making sure your room is dark and quiet, limiting caffeine and eating before bed, and writing your worries and your plans down before bed. This can help ease sleep anxiety.

Fearne Cotton Instagram



“We’re getting older as a population making falls more of a risk.”

Community Specialist Paramedic Sara Harris has worked for the ambulance service for 20 years. She started as an ambulance technician before qualifying as a paramedic seventeen years ago. Sara spent several years campaigning and advocating for people to know how to do cardiopulmonary resuscitation in her role within our Community Resuscitation Team.

In 2018, a change of job role meant she found herself back on the road responding to patients. She was seeing more and more people who had fallen and were often unable to get up independently. Whilst many of these patients often had minor injuries or medical conditions, their reasons for falling were complex and it sparked a different interest in Sara.

Sara embarked upon a master’s degree in advanced clinical practice in which she opted for a module that focused on advanced care of frail to older adults.

Sara says: “It was through education that I started to learn about the assessment and management of older people, and it has become something I am passionate about. We’re getting older as a population making falls more of a risk.”*

Last winter we took 8,122 calls for people who had fallen or fainted without injury, of this 78% of calls were for older adults aged 61 to 100+ years.

Sara continues: “Most of us will have experienced a fall at some point. Having a fall will be nothing more than a bit embarrassing for many, however, a fall can be startling, upsetting and life-changing, especially as we get older.

“There are several reasons why people fall which can all intertwine. This can be down to personal risk factors such as weak muscles, sensory issues, poor balance and walking difficulties. It can also be down to chronic medical conditions, medication side effects, delirium and fall hazards around the home.”

One thing Sara is keen to share is if you are vulnerable to falling or care for somebody like a parent who is vulnerable, there are actions to take which can minimise falls around the home.

She says: “At home, we tend to move around without thinking about our safety as it is where we are comfortable and where we spend much of our time. Falls prevention in and around the home may seem like common sense, however, it isn’t always easy to recognise the things that can cause trips, slips and falls.

“In my role, I have seen clutter, poor lighting, uneven surfaces and slippery floors as being some of the main causes of falls in older adults that could have been avoided.

“Making a few small changes at home will make it easier to get around and carry out daily activities. An important first step towards preventing falls at home is to remove anything that could cause trips or slips while walking around.”

There is a great deal of help and support available for older adults, and it’s worth asking you’re a GP about the various options.

A GP or healthcare professional may refer you, or the person you care for, to a specialist falls prevention service to carry out some simple tests to check balance. GPs can also review any medicines in case their side effects may increase risk of falling.

Falls prevention is a big part of our winter campaign this year. For more information visit: nwas.nhs.uk/falls

**The facts on our population*

In 2023, there are 11 million people aged over 65 in England. This is projected to increase by 10% in the next five years and by 32% by 2043 (1.1 and 3.5 million people respectively). The population aged 85+, the age group most likely to need health and care services, is also projected to rise rapidly, increasing by 8.2% in the next five years and by 62.7% by 2043 (126,000 and 956,000 people respectively).

Age UK, The State of Health and Care of Older People, 2023



LIFE AS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT LIVING IN MANCHESTER.



Anushka Thakur is an international student from Kuwait studying BSc Management at University of Manchester. In her spare time, she volunteers as one of our Patient and Public Panel (PPP) members and has shared her experience living in the UK as an international student.

Anushka started her studies in September 2020 and decided to study at a university where she could receive a world-class education and be exposed to various perspectives and cultures. So, Manchester's reputation as a multicultural hub with a thriving international student community made it a perfect choice for her to pursue her new chapter in life.

Moving away from home to living alone can be quite daunting but it has played a significant role in shaping Anushka's independence requiring her to manage her own responsibilities.

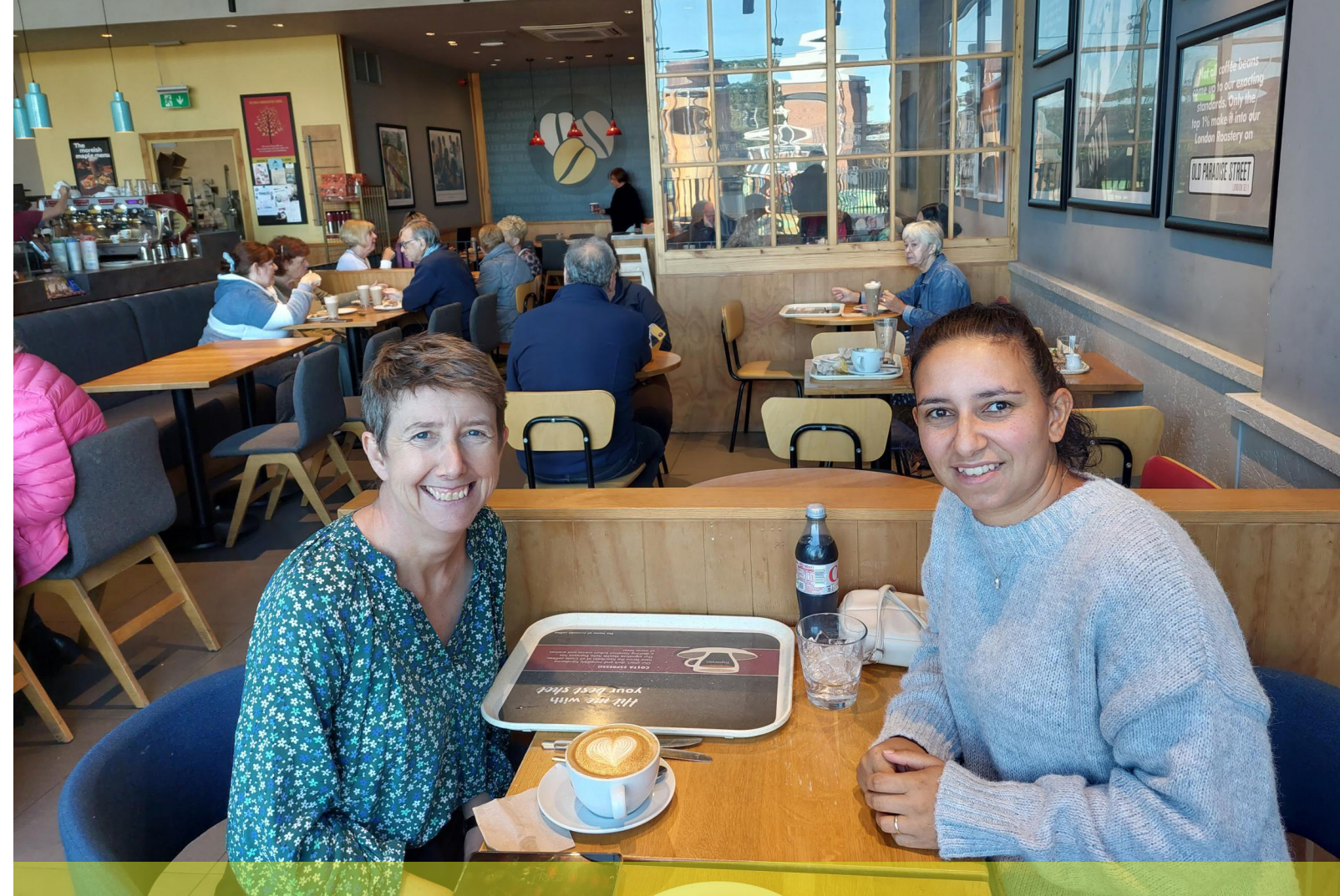
Anushka's advice for any new international students studying in another country is to embrace the full spectrum of university life experiences and connect with fellow international students who may be experiencing similar feelings, join cultural societies and over time, you'll find your own home away from home right here in no time.

Since volunteering with the ambulance service, Anushka has found becoming a PPP member incredibly fulfilling being able to make a difference by sharing her views on various pieces of work.

She says: "I decided to volunteer as a PPP member to positively impact my community by enhancing vital healthcare services. Moreover, the additional training opportunities, including life-saving skills and CPR demonstrations, added a practical dimension to the role has been brilliant. Being part of a community that values continuous learning and personal development was an extra incentive for my involvement."

With 12 universities spread across our region, this time of year often means the start of a new chapter and academic year for many in the North West. It can be a daunting time and change, especially for those moving thousands of miles away from home.

If you would like to join our PPP and make a difference like Anushka, visit:
nwas.nhs.uk/panel



Back to the floor.

A back-to-the-floor exercise we have initiated is hoping to inspire positive changes for staff. Introduced earlier this year, the reverse mentoring scheme sees our board executives and senior managers partnered with frontline staff, exposing them directly to the perspectives and challenges they face.

More than a dozen pairs have linked up in the programme's first phase. Two of those are Vicky Mellor, who has just completed a paramedic apprenticeship, and Director of People Lisa Ward. Most conversations have occurred in a relaxed environment over coffee, but Lisa has also joined Vicky and one of her colleagues for a shift in an ambulance to understand her life out on the road.

Lisa admits that while she wanted to focus on certain areas of Vicky's work life, discussions have brought up many other topics for reflection. "One of our current priorities is to increase recruitment within black, minority and ethnic communities, so initially, I was keen to understand why Vicky was attracted to the organisation and what it's like working here as someone from a mixed-race background.

"But in reality, it has also been great for me to understand her experience as a woman in the organisation, what

it's like to be a working mother who's gone through the paramedic apprenticeship programme, and the barriers and obstacles she faces. And because I'm in charge of the apprenticeship programme, I can take that back and consider how we might make it easier for others with existing domestic commitments to access these opportunities in the future.

"I'm conscious that we need to connect directly with frontline staff and get a better sense of how our decisions impact their working lives."

Lisa added. "So far, it's been incredibly valuable. We are due to hold a learning event later in the year for all pairings to give feedback on how it's gone, and the plan is to expand this to more people next year.

Vicky agrees that the scheme has so far been positive: "It's been worthwhile for me to understand why decisions are made and the competing perspectives behind them. Equally, I hope the discussions can lead to positive changes, and I'm glad I can play a role in that. Taking Lisa out on shift was a great opportunity to give her a first-hand look at some of the everyday practical and logistical issues we face. I'm encouraged to see what else we can look into over the next few meetings."

NHS

North West
Ambulance Service
NHS Trust



EVERY SECOND COUNTS

Is there a threat to life? Think 999. For less urgent help, think 111.nhs.uk.