

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

11 April 2024

Ambulance Waiting Times

Report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To scrutinise the local position in relation to the waiting times for an ambulance and the system-wide approaches in place to improve performance in this area.

2 Action required

- 2.1 The Committee is asked:

- 1) to make any comments or recommendations in response to the report from the NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) on the current waiting times for an ambulance and the system-wide approaches being taken to improve these; and
- 2) to consider whether any further scrutiny of the issue is required (and, if so, to identify the focus and timescales).

3 Background information

- 3.1 As part of achieving service recovery within the NHS following the Coronavirus pandemic, the national Urgent and Emergency Care Recovery Plan included objectives to address increased response times across all ambulance services to emergency incidents. Ambulance trusts were asked to provide plans to increase capacity and manage demand to achieve a national emergency incident response time of 30 minutes for 2023/24. The East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) developed a plan around three main focuses to improve its response time to emergency incidents: increasing capacity, managing demand and supporting staff. An average response time target of 39 minutes 49 seconds was set for the year.
- 3.2 Although performance across all of the ambulance response standards improved in January 2024 when compared to December 2023, none of the national performance standards were achieved, with EMAS' target response time to emergency incidents being missed by 2 minutes and 56 seconds, on average. Ultimately, high demand and hospital handover delays have impacted on ambulance waiting times, with the third and fourth weeks in January being particularly challenging.
- 3.3 EMAS' frontline resources remain high and there has been an increase in available hours through further recruitment and the use of additional ambulance providers. Sickness absence amongst frontline staff has reduced, but still

remains higher than target. Transport rates to hospitals continued to be relatively stable in January 2024, but a number of hospitals were experiencing periods of sustained pressure that impacted on patient handover times. Although there was a slight reduction when compared to December 2023, a quarter of patients met with prolonged waits during January 2024 – though the proportion of patient safety incidents and serious incidents remained stable.

- 3.4 To seek to help reduce demand for an ambulance, EMAS has introduced two Specialist Practitioner Hubs in Nottinghamshire. The Hubs are able to review patients waiting for an ambulance response, offer clinical advice and assess whether there is a more appropriate pathway available to meet patient need. The Specialist Practitioners are also available to respond to, see and treat patients before an ambulance arrives.
- 3.5 Additionally, a collaborative improvement plan has been put in place with the Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust (NUH) to support ambulance and hospital staff in handing over patients in a timely and effective way, so that ambulances are freed to respond to new incidents more quickly. NHS England's 'Getting It Right First Time' team has visited NUH and produced a report identifying six areas of focus for improvement, and EMAS, NUH and the ICB continue to work closely together in order to track and refine the collaborative improvement plan in response. Plans and performance are monitored at the Ambulance Turnaround Group, with oversight at the Urgent Emergency Care Delivery Board.

4 List of attached information

- 4.1 Report: Nottinghamshire Urgent and Emergency Healthcare

5 Background papers, other than published works or those disclosing exempt or confidential information

- 5.1 None

6 Published documents referred to in compiling this report

- 6.1 None

7 Wards affected

- 7.1 All

8 Contact information

- 8.1 Adrian Mann, Scrutiny and Audit Support Officer
adrian.mann@nottinghamcity.gov.uk