

West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Report to Dudley Health Scrutiny Panel

Service Transformation Update

1. Current position

The Trust currently operates from 13 sites in the Black Country. In the Dudley area this includes Cradley Heath, Halesowen and Stourbridge Ambulance stations.

400 operational ambulance staff work in the Black Country – 45% of these are paramedics.

2. Trust strategy

Our five year plan sets out how we intend to support patients by increasing the skill mix of our workforce and implementing a new operating model that will see more ambulance clinicians treating more patients outside of a hospital setting whilst maintaining our values of:

- World Class Service
- Patient Centred
- Dignity and Respect for All
- Skilled Workforce
- Teamwork
- Effective Communication

2.1 Strategic objectives

Realising the Trust's vision will be measured against a set of strategic objectives to be achieved by 2015/16.

- Achieve Quality and Excellence
- Accurately assess patient needs and direct resources appropriately
- Establish our market position as an emergency healthcare provider
- Work in Partnership

These will be achieved through the Trust's Integrated Business Plan and Annual Business Implementation plans. In relation to our organisational effectiveness, we intend to redesign the operational model and improve quality of care by making service improvements and defining measurable performance in a number of key aspects which include:

- Consistency in the clinical models employed through organisational development, the expansion of clinical supervision and progress towards achieving a paramedic on every ambulance and rapid response vehicle.
- Increases in productivity and efficiency through implementation of Make Ready, ensuring that the Trust respond the most appropriate resource in the first instance thus reducing the number of inappropriate and multiple responses being sent and reconfiguring the Trust's property portfolio to provide an estate fit for a modern Ambulance Service.
- Care pathway redesign through increased use of alternative pathways and implementation of a front end triage software system: NHS Pathways. These will reduce the percentage of calls requiring ambulance service attendance as callers will be given advice/directed to appropriate service. When an ambulance or rapid response vehicle does attend the crew will have access to a directory of services to refer patients to rather than conveying to hospital.

3. Make Ready

Make Ready is a quality assurance vehicle and equipment preparation programme designed to improve efficiencies across the whole spectrum of Ambulance Operations. It is based on a centralised Hub operation whereby Ambulance Fleet Assistants prepare vehicles for operational deployment.

3.1 Benefits of Make Ready

- Increase in vehicle cleanliness
- Minimising of cross infection
- Improvement in medicines management
- Maximise Unit Hour Utilisation through effective readiness
- Improved asset management & control of medical devices
- Minimise Critical Vehicle Failure Rate
- Assurance of consistency on vehicle stocking, checking, servicing
- Savings on drug wastage
- Savings on medical gases
- Savings on medical consumables

3.2 Hub location

The proposal is to implement a Hub in Dudley for Black Country South (Dudley and Sandwell) and Willenhall for Black Country North (Walsall and Wolverhampton).

The requirements of a Hub location are very operationally focused. That is to say, the facility needs large car parking areas (for both Trust vehicles and the staffs own transport), large garage areas, and specialist areas for vehicle maintenance, equipment cleaning, vehicle wash

and preparation, and areas for operational paramedics to book-on duty and take their statutory breaks.

The Dudley site will be at the current Dudley Ambulance Station which is currently undergoing a complete refurbishment. Work on the site is due to be completed by late March 2012.

The intention is that the Dudley Hub will be fully operational by July 2012.

3.3 Community Ambulance stations

A network of Community Ambulance Stations (CAS) will operate across the Black Country. The most important factor relating to the location of the Community Ambulance Stations is the geographic placement in order to deploy resources quickly and affect a response to patients in the shortest time possible.

In the Dudley area the intention is to have Community Ambulance Stations in the following locations:

- Burnt Tree
- Cradley Heath
- Halesowen
- Kingswinford
- Stourbridge
- Tipton

In addition the Dudley Hub will also service the Community Ambulance Station in Wombourne.

Several of these Community Ambulance Stations will also operate Community Paramedic schemes. These will be formed from teams of paramedics who have undertaken additional education and training through Higher Education and development in clinical settings. They have an enhanced knowledge and skills to treat more patients with minor injury or illness in their own home and so avoid conveyance to hospital. They will operate in rapid response vehicles and also work in partnership with local health services. The process of selecting and training these staff is already underway.

The Trust is engaging with a range of partner agencies on the siting of Community Ambulance Station locations for Dudley and wider Black Country area. Predominantly this involves working in partnership with West Midlands Fire Service. It is also recognised that other organisations such as Councils and PCTs may be able to offer opportunities which might assist the Ambulance Service in this regard. WMAS fully recognise that effective partnerships ensure good value for the public and often assist with joined up working arrangements for the future.

4 Conclusion

The implementation of Make Ready and the Hub system is part of a wider service improvement programme. It is fundamentally aimed at improving the service we provide to our patients. It will:

- Support the Trust's key objectives
- Improve efficiencies within A&E Operations
- Reduce expenditure on stock & wastage of disposable items
- Minimise operational 'down time' due to logistical issues

- Provide effective management of medical devices
- Improve control of medicines management
- Improve Care Quality Commission compliancy and infection prevention & control issues

Alongside the workforce developments and introduction of NHS Pathways and expansion of alternate pathways this will lead to improved quality of care and outcomes.

I will keep members informed of developments with regards the development of the Hub and Community Ambulance Stations and offer an invitation to visit the Dudley Hub on completion of the refurbishment work. In the meantime the Trust will be pleased to host a visit for members to one of the existing Make Ready sites in Staffordshire to see the operation in a live setting.

Richard Topping
General Manager – Black Country

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