



Update from Yorkshire Ambulance Service

Date	14 June 2024
Forum	North Yorkshire Council Scrutiny of Health Committee

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update for the committee on the delivery of services and current challenges from Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) within the North Yorkshire Council area, and an update on recent developments.

2.0 Demand and performance

- 2.1 As a key part of the urgent and emergency care system, YAS continues to see high levels of operational demand. However, whilst the service has experienced some challenges over the last year, we have seen some positive improvements in response times in A&E Operations, particularly for category 1 and 2 patients, who are the most seriously ill. The national target for 2023/24 was for all English ambulance services to achieve a category 2 mean response time of under 30 minutes. The average category 2 response time for YAS for 2023/24 was 32 minutes and 32 seconds. There were several challenges in achieving the 30-minute target.
- 2.2 Patient handover delays at Emergency Departments continued to be significantly above the national target of 15 minutes. Pressures across the health and social care system contribute to the hospital handover delays, and the Trust remains concerned about the significant impact this has on the availability of emergency ambulances and on patient care. There are challenges at several hospitals, and we are working closely with our system partners to resolve these. The average handover time at Scarborough Hospital for 2023/24 was 44 minutes and 4 seconds and an average of 28 ambulance hours per day were lost due to delayed handovers. At York, the average handover was 36 minutes and 58 seconds, and an average of 29 ambulance hours were lost per day due to handover delays. The average handover at Harrogate for 2023/24 was 21 minutes and 43 seconds which is still outside of the 15-minute target.

These delays have continued into April 2024 where the average handover times have been:

- Scarborough - 1 hour and 2 minutes
- York - 53 minutes and 41 seconds
- Harrogate - 24 minutes and 29 seconds

2.3 Initiatives to support the achievement of the category 2 target include:

- Working with partners to reduce hospital handover times, thereby freeing up resources to respond to patients.
- Increase Hear and Treat rates (i.e., no ambulance response sent to the patient and an alternative, more appropriate service identified). In 2023/24 operational

paramedics were offered the opportunity to rotate into a Senior Clinical Advisor role undertaking hear and treat. The hear and treat rate improved from 8.8% in 2022/23 to 10.4% in 2023/24, and for April 2024 this was 14.6%. This model will be expanded in 2024/25.

- Increase in staffing including international paramedics, university students and Ambulance Support Workers (ASWs).
- Utilising alternative patient care pathways and specialist responses for patients, such as our Mental Health Response Vehicle, in partnership with the wider system.

- 2.4 Our Integrated Urgent Care (IUC) service, which provides our NHS 111 service, has continued to see improvements in call response times, answering roughly 20% more calls in 60 seconds than the year before. The service does, however, experience increased pressure during public holidays with limited availability of primary care services.
- 2.5 NHS 111 demand patterns continue to be significantly different from previous years despite the end of the COVID-19 pandemic which initially triggered the change, with demand now experienced throughout the day, rather than peaking at key times out of hours (such as evening and weekends). The increases are reflective of challenges in primary care as patients find access to other parts of the health system more difficult. Work is ongoing within IUC to recruit and retain staff on improved working patterns in order to meet this demand.
- 2.6 In NHS 111, the Trust continues to recruit into our call centres across both Clinical and Health Advisor positions, with a transformation programme underway to improve their working, with improved working patterns, and improvements to leadership, education and training opportunities and a clear career structure. In 2023/24, IUC also trained four cohorts of international nurses, to support the expansion of our clinical workforce, with highly experienced nurses from India and Dubai.

3.0 Developments

3.1 Clinical Pathways

During 2023/24 we introduced an additional role of Clinical Pathways Manager specifically focused on the North Yorkshire area. Working in partnership with our central pathways team, they have focused on identifying new clinical pathways for our crews to utilise as an alternative to transporting patients to Emergency Departments and reviewing/improving established pathways, including identification of clinical pathways which would be suitable for 'Hear and Treat' by our clinicians within our Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs).

Reducing avoidable conveyances by optimising alternative pathways improves hospital flow by ensuring only those patients who need hospital care are treated there. Improved flow in turn improves hospital handover times, releasing further ambulances to reach patients in the community. Accessing alternative clinical pathways further improves ambulance availability by ensuring the right community service is sent to patients. By improving access to the appropriate clinical pathways, performance and patient care will be improved.

Examples of pathways developments across North Yorkshire include:

- Crews and EOC clinicians accessing the new Frailty Advice and Guidance service in York.

- Piloting a GP working from the EOC in York to 'Hear and Treat' lower acuity patients and support on-scene crews with advice and guidance.
- Improved access to falls services across North Yorkshire.
- York Mental Health Rapid Response Vehicle.
- Increased utilisation of Urgent Community Response (UCR) services and Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs).
- Improved direct access to Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) services.

3.2 Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (PTS)

PTS North operated 139,146 journeys in 2023/24, a 4.9% increase to the previous year. PTS has four Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to achieve:

- KPI 1 – 90% picked up within 120 minutes before appointment.
- KPI 2 – 90% arrive between 0-120 minutes before appointment.
- KPI 3 – 90% of pre-planned picked up within 90 minutes of booked ready.
- KPI 4 – 90% of short notice picked up within 120 minutes of booked ready.

During 2023/24, PTS performed well against KPIs 1-3, with the majority meeting target. Short Notice Outwards Performance (KPI 4) saw a positive increase in service level over the second half of 2023/24 due to Winter Discharge Funding, however fell below target for the year (Scarborough and Vale of York - 82.6% and Hambleton, Richmond and Whitby (HRW) & Harrogate -84.8%).

Following a national review in 2021, NHS England launched the new national framework for non-emergency Patient Transport Services requiring them to become consistently more responsive, fair, and sustainable when providing transport for those with a medical or mobility need but reminded systems that patients should travel independently when able to do so. The three Yorkshire and Humber Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), as commissioners of this service, are working with Yorkshire Ambulance Service to review this framework and its implementation.

3.3 Estates strategy

YAS had planned investment in a new Scarborough station and purchased land next to the hospital, with a commitment to develop the site and secured permission to build. Unfortunately, due to significant escalating costs, at the end of 2023, the Trust made the difficult decision to pause the new Scarborough station build. Unfortunately, due to increasing demand on our capital allocation, the Trust is unlikely to see the new build continue in 2024/25 unless we can secure additional funding. Instead, our allocation for 2024/25 capital will focus on the requirement to increase the number of double crew ambulances in operation with new vehicles being purchased to reduce our vehicle age profile and increase vehicle availability and reliability.

An overarching Trust Estates Strategy for 2024/29 has been approved in principle and once the implementation plan is completed (which is expected during the second quarter of 2024/25), there will be clear direction for addressing issues identified in our estate in North Yorkshire.

4.0 Recommendation

This paper provides an update for the Scrutiny committee on the current challenges faced by YAS and the steps that it is taking to address them. It is recommended that the update is noted for comment and consideration.