



Mike Hedges MS
Chair
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
Senedd

SeneddLJC@senedd.wales

5 August 2025

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 8 July following the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee's and the Equality and Social Justice Committee's visit to Parc Prison. I am responding to your questions as they are part of my portfolio responsibilities.

As Cabinet Secretary, I set the strategic direction for health and care services in Wales and hold the Welsh NHS to account. Operational decisions relating to the planning and delivery of emergency ambulance services, are the responsibility of the Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust in line with commissioning intentions set of it by the NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee. This includes ensuring equitable access to emergency ambulance services. I expect people in prisons to receive a response based on their clinical need in an appropriate timeframe to support optimal outcomes.

The Welsh Ambulance Service aims to respond to all 999 calls as quickly as possible, in order of clinical priority, but there are times when high levels of demand or delays elsewhere in the system can mean there is not always an ambulance available immediately to dispatch to a 999 call. This can lead to some other calls waiting longer than we would normally expect.

On 30 June, I [announced](#) the ambulance service will trial changes to its clinical response model from 1 July. These changes are designed to save more lives and improve people's outcomes following a cardiac arrest, a serious illness, incident or accident.

The new model also sees the introduction of a rapid clinical screening process for 999 calls, which is undertaken by a senior paramedic or nurse and takes place immediately after the initial assessment by a 999 call handler. The introduction of a screening process enables a more tailored approach to an individual's need based on their presenting condition. It will also help to ensure that vital emergency ambulance resources are available respond to people most in need.

Further to these changes, on 16 July, I [announced](#) additional changes to the emergency ambulance performance framework to ensure an outcome-focused approach across all contacts with the Welsh Ambulance Service. This aligns to our overarching strategy for urgent and emergency care in Wales, to enable the right care, in the right place, first time.

The ongoing high level of ambulance patient handover delays at emergency departments is impacting on the ability of the Welsh Ambulance Service to respond to 999 calls in the community. My expectation is that health boards deliver the [Ambulance Patient Handover Guidance](#) – this is one of the five priorities ('enabling actions') for urgent and emergency care in the NHS planning framework for 2025/2026.

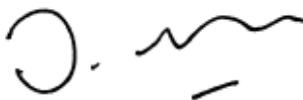
To support delivery of the evolving ambulance response model, which is predicated on greater ambulance availability through improved patient flow, we have set up a new clinically-lead National Handover Taskforce. The taskforce will identify and oversee action to improve handover performance, learning from UK wide and international best practice.

Encouragingly, we have already seen local strategies to improve ambulance patient handover performance coming to fruition over recent weeks, which has supported improved ambulance responsiveness. In the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board area, there were 33% fewer ambulance hours lost, and 69% fewer patients delayed more than an hour when compared to June 2024. The 15-minute handover performance was 47% and we expect to see this improve. The approach behind initial successes will be shared with all health boards.

The committee may wish to direct its specific questions about ambulance response times to calls from Parc Prison to the Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust.

Regarding prescribing matters, prison pharmacies are expected to comply with professional standards for [medicines optimisation in secure environments](#), as described by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. All prisons in Wales are subject to an external review against these standards. Health boards have prepared action plans in response to the findings of the external review and are working to implement recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a circular mark followed by a wavy line and a short horizontal stroke.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care