

Eluned Morgan AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1274
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/01517/22

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

27 April 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 4 April regarding Petition P-06-1274 Stop the removal of the Rapid Response Vehicle for Monmouth.

While I have a role as Minister for Health and Social Services to set the strategic direction for health and care services in Wales and hold the NHS to account, ambulance resourcing is an operational matter and as such remains the responsibility of the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST), in collaboration with local health boards and the Emergency Ambulance Services Committee (EASC), as the joint commissioners of ambulance services in Wales.

The Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust initiated a national roster review in April 2021 following the recommendations from an independent demand and capacity review which it jointly commissioned with the Emergency Ambulance Services Committee to inform future configuration of resources and staffing across Wales. That review highlighted a requirement to better match capacity to demand through a mix of additional recruitment and the delivery of a number of operational efficiencies, including a review of existing staff rosters.

The national roster review process is intended to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of rosters and ensure staff and resources are best placed geographically to deliver a responsive and equitable emergency ambulance service across all parts of Wales. It is imperative to better manage the increasing demands experienced by ambulance services in Wales and align capacity to meet current and future demand as a fundamental part of planning and delivering a modern, high performing service for the people of Wales.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

As part of the review, it has been recommended that the peak ambulance production (i.e. when it has most ambulances on duty) should be brought forward to align with the daily demand peak and there should be a change to the mix of ambulance resource, significantly reducing Rapid Response Vehicles (RRVs), which do not convey patients, and increasing emergency ambulances (EAs).

The Trust considers this shift from RRVs to EAs to be a natural step forward as part of the clinical response model, introduced in 2015, where the evidence shows that sending the right response, and early provision of definitive care, takes precedence over speed of response for the vast majority of incidents, particularly those outside the Red category and patients requiring direct conveyance to hospital.

RRVs are considered to be less productive than EAs on the basis that:

- they carry less equipment,
- the pool of incidents that they attend is smaller than EAs,
- they often require back-up support from EAs to transport patients to hospital,
- within the clinical model in operation in Wales, they do not provide a significant response time gain over EAs, and crucially
- EAs can transport patients to the definitive care they need.

Specific stations may see a reduction in their planned resource following implementation of the new rosters, but this is set within the context of an enhanced position across an entire locality, health board and region. It is also intended that by resetting emergency ambulance cover, the Trust will be able to reduce responses to calls “out of area” and improve overall availability.

The new rosters for all stations in Wales are being developed in partnership between WAST management teams and staff, facilitated by an external roster company. This work is ongoing and is being taken forward in partnership with staff, Trade Union colleagues and commissioners. I expect the revised rosters to begin to be implemented in September 2022.

Jason Killens, the Trust’s chief executive, recently issued a letter to stakeholders, which included a briefing on the review and what is likely to happen across Wales as the outcome of the roster review is implemented. He has also offered the opportunity for local elected representatives to meet with the Trust so they can be fully conversant with the facts and any local implications for their constituencies. A copy of Mr Killens’ letter and briefing to stakeholders can be found at the following links:

<https://www.ambulance.wales.nhs.uk/Media/Documents/Roster%20Review%20Stakeholder%20Letter%20March%202022.pdf>

<https://www.ambulance.wales.nhs.uk/Media/Documents/Roster%20Review%20Stakeholder%20Briefing%20March%202022.pdf>.

As part of its commitment to delivering safe and effective services, the Trust will regularly assess the effectiveness of rosters moving forward, and update and adjust them in response to changing patterns of demand, changes to clinical and operating models, modernisation of the ambulance estate, patient needs and staff welfare.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

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