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Gwasanaethau Ambiwylans Cymru
Welsh Ambulance Services
University NHS Trust

MINUTES OF THE WELSH AMBULANCE SERVICES UNIVERSITY NHS TRUST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

Meeting held on **27 September 2024 at 09:30**

Held via Zoom and Facebook

The following were in attendance:

Colin Dennis	Chair of the Trust Board
Jason Killens	Chief Executive
Simon Amphlett	Specialist Clinical Lead for Mental Health
Lee Brooks	Executive Director of Operations
Peter Curran	Non-Executive Director
Bethan Evans	Non-Executive Director
Estelle Hitchon	Director of Partnerships and Engagement
Ceri Jackson	Vice Chair and Non-Executive Director
Angie Lewis	Director of People and Culture
Rachel Marsh	Executive Director of Strategy, Planning and Performance
Trish Mills	Director of Corporate Governance/Board Secretary
Edward O'Brian	Palliative Care Paramedic
Hugh Parry	Tarde Union Partner
Alex Payne	Corporate Governance Manager
Hannah Rowan	Non-Executive Director
Jonny Sammut	Director of Digital Services
Andy Swinburn	Executive Director of Paramedicine
Chris Turley	Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources
Liam Williams	Executive Director of Quality and Nursing

1. Chair's Welcome

- 1.1 The Chair, Colin Dennis welcomed all to the Meeting and gave an outline of the agenda. He reminded attendees that it was an open meeting, and any questions from the public were welcomed.
- 1.2 The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and approved by the Trust Board Members.

- 1.3 The Chair added that the 2023/24 Annual Report and Accounts were available as part of the presentation pack.

2. Annual Report and Accounts Overview

Chris Turley provided an overview and gave more details on the areas below:

- 2.1 The draft accounts had been formally submitted to Audit Wales on 3 May 2024 with all statutory financial duties being met and in line with the revised timescales for 2023/24.
- 2.2 A retained surplus for the year of £0.085m was achieved and was effectively a balanced position.
- 2.3 An unqualified and clean audit opinion was issued on the accounts by Audit Wales and were not subjected to any other regulatory opinion.
- 2.4 A detailed breakdown of all the income for the year was provided.
- 2.5 From a revenue spend perspective, the vast majority (71%) was on staff costs, details of the remainder were given in a graphical presentation.
- 2.6 The Trust achieved Public Sector Payments Policy (PSPP) of 96.4% within 30 days against the 95% target.
- 2.7 Capital expenditure (£25.301m) – most of the capital was spent on the Fleet (54%) with other expenditure on Estates (12%), Equipment (4%) and Digital and ICT (30%)

3. Chief Executive's year in review

- 3.1 The Chief Executive, Jason Killens opened by thanking on behalf of the Executive Leadership Team, all staff for their sterling work over the past year.
- 3.2 During the past year the Trust had faced several challenges which had impacted on performance, and this was illustrated in more detail by way of a PowerPoint presentation.
- 3.3 In terms of highlights from the performance outputs of last year Lee Brooks, the Executive Director of Operations, provided a presentation which included detail on the following areas:

- 3.4 Non-Emergency Patient transport Services (NEPTS). The demand for NEPTS had been higher than 999 Emergency Medical Services. The Trust had achieved its main 30 minute inbound renal target for every month in 2023/24, and overall NEPTS performance had been stable.
- 3.5 In terms of the 111 service. The Trust achieved the call abandonment rate target for six months during last year and the clinician call back target was achieved for all 12 months for the highest priority calls.
- 3.6 With regards to the 999 service, 65% of 999 calls were answered within two seconds throughout the year. It was noted that 95% of 999 calls were answered within 45 seconds. The median call pick up time remained consistently around 2/3 seconds.
- 3.7 Response to 999 calls. The Trust was expected to reach 65% of Red calls within eight minutes, however this target was not met for last year, but there has been more consistency in performance over the last year compared to the year before.
- 3.8 Red Performance: Although the 65% target has not been achieved, the Trust has responded to more patients within eight minutes. There has been an increase of 13% from the previous year to responses within eight minutes.
- 3.9 The Trust has made significant strides in improving service quality. The dedication and hard work staff, especially under pressure, was truly commendable. Enhancements in staff attendance, better roster creation, and a focused dispatch approach were all crucial elements that contributed to this progress.
- 3.10 It was clear that hospital handover delays were a significant challenge, impacting the Trust's efficiency and patient care. Losing between 20,000 and 25,000 hours of response capacity each month was substantial. The correlation between lost capacity and Amber median response times highlighted the urgency of addressing this issue.

The Executive Director of Quality and Nursing, Liam Williams continued the presentation from the patient safety and concerns perspective:

- 3.11 A new Duty of Quality Statutory Guidance and Quality Standards 2023 was introduced, and the Trust continued to be assessed against the 12 Health and Care Quality Standards as a result. The Trust was making significant steps towards improving service delivery and the Team was proactively evaluating these standards both in advance of and during the reporting year.

- 3.12 The Trust recognised that it did not always get things right and continued to embrace the Duty Of Candour with full commitment. The Trust was committed to improving its services and ensuring transparency and accountability through the Duty of Candour. The organisation continued to build trust within the community through engagement with community groups and schools to gather feedback to understand their needs and perceptions.
- 3.13 The Trust has been enhancing its Quality Impact Assessments (QIA) and ensuring transparency through various Annual Reports. The Duty of Quality Annual Report for 2023/24 was a valuable resource for anyone interested in understanding the Trust's commitment to quality and transparency.
- 3.14 Delays in transferring patients to the Emergency Department (ED) have a major impact on the Trust's ability to respond to new emergencies. There were 72,000 patients waiting over an hour outside the ED last year.
- 3.15 The Trust was unable to send ambulances to around 108,000 patients, leading some patients to seek healthcare on their own.
- 3.16 The Trust received over 400 Coroner requests and were committed to providing clarity to families and working closely with partners to address these issues and prevent future harm. As a result of these Coroner requests, the Trust received nine Regulation 28 notices where improvements were needed to prevent future deaths.
- 3.17 The number of cases referred to the Public Service Ombudsman had decreased to 36. This reduction was a testament to the dedication and effectiveness of the "Putting Things Right" team.

Andy Swinburn, Executive Director of Paramedicine, continued the presentation highlighting the following areas particularly focused around Clinical Indicators:

- 3.18 Key Clinical Indicators like the Return of Spontaneous Circulation (ROSC) and the care packages for stroke patients were measured through performance metrics. These metrics were crucial for assessing the effectiveness of interventions and ensuring high-quality patient care. The accurate documentation on the Electronic patient care record (ePCR) was essential for capturing this information and measuring performance. This data not only helped in tracking progress but also in identifying areas for improvement.
- 3.19 The Clinical Indicator Improvement Plan was starting to show positive results; enhancing the ePCR to prompt accurate documentation and increasing communication with clinicians had proven to be excellent strategies.

Angela Lewis, Director of People and Culture, continued the presentation highlighting the following areas:

- 3.20 During the last year, the Advanced Paramedic Practitioner (APP) workforce has doubled which was a significant achievement and a crucial step towards enhancing the service capabilities.
- 3.21 The efforts in staff retention were paying off, with reduced turnover rates. The Trust was focussed on understanding why colleagues decided to leave and investing in induction and onboarding for new staff ensuring a safe and supportive work environment. There were regular check-ins and additional support during the first year in helping new staff feel valued and integrated.
- 3.22 There has been a positive impact of the use of absence management strategies. There has been a reduction in sickness absence with approximately 25% of staff taking no sick leave at all. The Trust continues to equip managers with the skills to support unwell staff and bring them back to work at the right time.
- 3.23 There was an increase in Emergency Medical Service ambulance production hours, going from just over 110,000 hours in March 2022 to 119,000 hours by the end of March 2023.
- 3.24 The Trust welcomed 84 newly qualified Paramedics, along with 94 new colleagues to the Emergency Medical Service Coordination service, 78 to the 111 service, and 51 to the Ambulance Care Team.
- 3.25 In terms of completion of Personal Appraisal and Development Reviews (PADR), the year end figure of 78% failed to achieve the target of 85%, however there was an improvement on the 72.1% compliance figure of 2022/23.

Chris Turley, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources, continued the presentation highlighting the following areas from a Value and Sustainability in Capital Development perspective:

- 3.26 It was pleasing to inform the meeting of the achievements to date with small investments, especially within the larger context of NHS Wales' budget. The Trust was focusing on sustainability with a commitment to the Decarbonisation Action Plan which was crucial for the long-term environmental impact.
- 3.27 The Trust was using as effectively as it could, the funds from the Welsh Government to focus on retrofitting and decarbonisation efforts. Backlog maintenance had been reduced by over two-thirds in the last five to six years

which was a significant achievement. The Trust was committed to making its Estate more environmentally friendly by addressing maintenance issues which will improve the sustainability of operations and enhance the safety and well-being of everyone who uses the facilities.

- 3.28 From revenue funding, there has been some smaller-scale improvements, with minor improvement across a range of the Trust's Estate which have significantly enhanced the working environment for staff. The maintaining and improving of the 120 to 130 sites across Wales was no small feat, especially with the variety in size and configuration.
- 3.29 There has been positive progress in reducing emissions, especially with a 20% reduction related to fossil fuel heating, lighting, and utilities.

Andy Swinburn, Executive Director of Paramedicine, continued the presentation highlighting the following areas focusing in getting the patients the right care in the right place:

- 3.30 The Trust was expanding its approach to clinical care beyond just emergency ambulance services response. Its ambition was to manage more patients without deploying an emergency ambulance, therefore ensuring that resources were available for those who were the most critically ill.
- 3.31 In terms of Consult and Close, managing patients remotely on the phone where they do not need an emergency ambulance and where other Healthcare pathways might be better suited for their presenting complaint, the Trust achieved the target of 15%. This approach has helped in efficiently utilising emergency resources and ensures that patients receive the most appropriate care for their needs.
- 3.32 The Trust also looks at the number of patients that have been directed to other parts of the Healthcare System instead of the Emergency Department (ED). By diverting patients to alternative care pathways, the Trust was optimising the use of emergency resources and improving overall system efficiency which can significantly reduce ED delays and enhance patient outcomes.

Trish Mills, Director of Corporate Governance/Board Secretary, continued the presentation highlighting the following areas focusing on the Trust's Accountability Report:

- 3.33 The Accountability Report highlighted the pivotal roles and responsibilities of the Chair, Colin Dennis, and the Accountable Officer and Chief Executive, Jason

Killens, and provides transparency and insight into how decisions were made and implemented by the Trust.

- 3.34 There was a strong commitment to excellence and quality which has been shown through the detailed work of the Committees and Advisory Group. Robust and structured annual reviews of the Board's effectiveness have been conducted, demonstrating a dedication to continuous improvement and accountability.
- 3.35 The Trust Board and its Committees have been diligent in holding all their scheduled meetings and development sessions for the 2023/24 financial year. These meetings were all quorate which was essential for effective governance and decision-making.
- 3.36 The Accountability Report also included details about the Board's membership, its declarations of interests, and Members' remuneration which was illustrated in the section under the Remuneration Report.
- 3.37 The Head of Internal Audit's opinion for 2023/24 provided a reasonable assurance on the Trust's governance and risk arrangements. Furthermore, the positive Structured Assessment from Audit Wales underscored the improvements in the governance framework and the effective oversight of Board and Committee operations.
- 3.38 In terms of the Staff Report, this highlighted the comprehensive efforts the Trust was making to foster a safe and inclusive work environment. Initiatives like speaking up safely, active bystander and allyship training, and focusing on equality, diversity, and inclusion continued to be developed to create a supportive workplace culture.

4. Spotlight on Palliative Care

A presentation that took place which spotlighted the work being undertaken on Palliative Care and this was given by Ed O'Brian Palliative Care Paramedic:

- 4.1 Education: The Trust provided comprehensive end-of-life care training for all new starters, regardless of their role or clinical grade. This ensured that everyone was well-prepared to manage these sensitive situations with the utmost care and compassion. The Trust collaborated with Universities such as Swansea University to develop placements for student Paramedics which gave them valuable experience with specialist palliative care teams before they even start working on the road. E-learning and Continuous Professional

Development (CPD) sessions had been introduced in conjunction with Hospices and Palliative Medicine Doctors.

- 4.2 Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services, End of Life Care (NEPTS): The End of Life Care Rapid Transport Service has been an incredibly compassionate and essential initiative. This allows healthcare professionals to book an ambulance for patients who wish to be in their preferred place of death, such as a hospice, is a profound way to honour their final wishes and provide comfort during such a critical time. Facilitating 5,000 journeys since its introduction in 2017 was a testament to the service's impact.
- 4.3 Just in Case Medications: A full range of Just in Case medications were carried on every emergency vehicle in the Trust. These medications were crucial for urgent symptom control, helping to reduce distress and avoid unnecessary Emergency Department admissions. Having access to these medications ensures that Paramedics can provide immediate and effective care, which was especially important in managing symptoms and improving patient comfort.
- 4.4 Wish Ambulance: The Wish Ambulance service allows volunteer clinicians from any grade within the Trust to support terminally ill patients by fulfilling their final wishes. These wishes can be anything meaningful to the patients, such as visiting the beach one last time. The service is provided throughout Wales and is highly valued for the joy and comfort it brings to patients in their final days.
- 4.5 Rotational Palliative Care Paramedics: The rotational palliative care paramedics programme, introduced by the Trust, involved a 50/50 split in duties. These Paramedics spend half their time collaborating with a specialist palliative care team, providing an urgent rapid response capability that was previously unavailable. This collaboration not only enhances the specialist teams' responsiveness but also allows paramedics to gain valuable knowledge, confidence, and skills in palliative and end-of-life care.
- 4.6 In Wales, a four-year data analysis revealed that 9% of 999 incidents each year involved patients with palliative conditions in their last year of life. Of these patients, 90% needed to access 999 services during their final year, with each patient calling for emergency assistance at least twice on average. The data also showed that 22% of palliative care patients accessed 999 services in their last two days of life, and 32% did so in their last 7 days. This underscores the critical role the Trust plays in supporting patients in crisis during their final days.
- 4.7 The growing pool of rotational palliative care paramedics, who have gained enhanced knowledge, skills, and confidence through their work with specialist palliative care teams, has enabled the trial of a rapid response service.

- 4.8 The palliative care paramedics are an additional resource, staffing a dedicated car that supplements the existing emergency ambulance fleet. This allows for targeted responses to palliative and end-of-life care calls without reducing the availability of regular emergency vehicles.
- 4.9 Following an analysis of the first 200 incidents managed by palliative care paramedics from the dedicated response car, it was found that 88% of these patients avoided emergency department admissions.

5. Spotlight on Mental Health

The Executive Director of Quality and Nursing, Liam Williams, introduced Simon Amphlett, Specialist Clinical lead for Mental Health who provided a presentation with a spotlight in Mental Health:

- 5.1 The Trust responded to over 30,000 Mental Health related 999 calls during last year.
- 5.2 The number of Mental Health Practitioners has continued to grow in the Trust, they have a significant impact on the number of consult and close calls of 41%.
- 5.3 The Trust has received international recognition for improvement in services for patients living with dementia.
- 5.4 Going forward it was hoped to deliver the service further and increase coverage by expanding the hours of support to 24/7. Furthermore, the Trust was looking to expand Mental Health Response Vehicles (MHRV) across Wales.
- 5.5 Between January and March of this year, 74% of cases were closed with treatment on the scene, and only 19% of patients needed to be conveyed to the ED.
- 5.6 The Trust conveyed 7% of callers to Mental Health Services, primarily for inpatient care. The remaining calls were managed by signposting patients to appropriate services, arranging follow-ups with services they were already connected to, or providing urgent support for the patients and their families as needed.
- 5.7 The projects to date have been a tremendous success, demonstrating the power of partnerships across organisations to overcome barriers and achieve significant outcomes. For Mental Health patients, who often face long waits and psychological hardships while awaiting treatment, the introduction of MHRV

and practices within the Clinical Support Desk (CSD) has been transformative. Having Mental Health Practitioners in the control room has significantly boosted the confidence of control room staff when handling calls involving Mental Health patients.

6. Forward Look

Rachel Marsh, Executive Director of Strategy, Planning and Performance, provided a presentation on the Forward Look:

- 6.1 The Long-Term Strategy, "Delivering Excellence," published in 2019, outlined the ambition to transform from a traditional ambulance and transport service into a trusted provider of high-quality care. This strategy would ensure that all patients received the right care or advice in the right place, every time. The presentations from Ed and Simon today have highlighted how this ambition was being realised, highlighting the progress and commitment to delivering exceptional care.
- 6.2 The Integrated Medium Term Plan (IMTP) has been approved by Welsh Government. This was a three-year roadmap designed to guide the Trust towards its long-term ambitions. The plan outlined the specific steps and initiatives to be undertaken over the next three years, ensuring progress towards becoming a trusted provider of high quality care.
- 6.3 The Welsh Government's expectations were a key part of the IMTP, but it was also a crucial guide for the Trust. As the plan is developed, great importance on listening to the voices of patients is placed. The Trust's website contains extensive information about patient feedback and their suggestions for service improvements. The Trust also considers the insights and feedback from colleagues, the intentions of Commissioners, and the strategic direction set by the Welsh Government. All these elements were carefully integrated to ensure the plan was comprehensive and aligned with the needs and expectations of everyone involved.
- 6.4 This year's focus was on transforming the way the Trust delivers care to patients and addressing areas where the service needs improvement. The Trust recognises the importance of enhancing the working environments, as staff were crucial to delivering high quality care. Additionally, creating a sustainable organisation was a key priority, not only from a financial standpoint but also from an environmental perspective.
- 6.5 In the past, ambulance services were viewed as three distinct entities: the 999 emergency services, the 111 Non-Emergency services, and the ambulance care

services. However, the Trust was now expanding its offerings to include a digital arm and a growing Remote Integrated Care Service. This includes having clinicians in the contact centres who can work with patients remotely, providing excellent care and support. This integrated approach allows the Trust to offer a more comprehensive and cohesive service to patients.

- 6.6 The Trust was aiming to become more clinically focused as an organisation. This year, the Trust has recruited 28 Clinical Navigators, a new role where experienced staff will screen the majority of our 999 calls early on. Currently, non-clinician call handlers take these calls, but the Clinical Navigators will add clinical decision-making and insight right from the start, ensuring patients were directed to the appropriate care pathway.
- 6.7 Focusing on our people and creating a great working environment was a key priority. This includes training culture champions and supporting change agents to drive cultural transformation. The Trust has established “Voices Networks” where staff can discuss issues that matter to them. There were also Chief Executive Roadshows twice a year to listen to staff feedback and there are initiatives in place to ensure staff feel safe to report any issues or concerns.
- 6.8 There was progress in enhancing capacity within the Trust and this included the re-banding of Technicians into a Band 5 Role. This change not only recognises their skills and contributions but also aims to ensure that the available capacity was used effectively.
- 6.9 The Trust will be developing the capability of its leaders and managers by introducing a new development framework called the WAST way. This Framework aims to enhance leadership skills and ensure that leaders were well-equipped to drive the Trust forward, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and excellence.
- 6.10 A programme has been in place for the past couple of years to ensure financial stability, and this work will continue. This includes optimising staff rosters in the 111 and NEPTS services to ensure coverage aligned with demand. Additionally, last year’s review of administrative functions has led to recommendations that will be implemented this year to improve efficiency. This year, the focus will be on refreshing the Decarbonisation Action Plan and developing strategies to adapt to climate change.
- 6.11 Other initiatives and plans being worked on included: The Strategic Workforce Plan recently approved by the Board which aims to ensure the Trust has the right people in place to meet future needs. The Digital Plan: this was launched last week, which focuses on leveraging technology to improve services and

patient care. The Quality and Clinical Plan was being refreshed to ensure it remained relevant and effective. There were ongoing Improvements to the Estate and Fleet to update facilities and innovate fleet solutions to enhance service delivery. There was strong engagement with commissioners, Welsh Government, Health Boards, the public, and staff to ensure plans were comprehensive and inclusive.

7. Financial Plan and Budget

Chris Turley, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources, highlighted the following areas:

- 7.1 The Trust Board approved and submitted a balanced financial plan and budget in March 2024.
- 7.2 The Trust has consistently maintained financial balance and was forecasted to continue doing so through the 2024/25 financial year. There were, however, always risks and assumptions that need to be managed, especially through the winter and the latter half of the year.

8. Questions from the public

The Director of Partnerships and Engagement, Estelle Hitchon advised that no questions had been put forward to the Trust. She added that for anyone interested, to check the website and social media for details about the next and future meetings of the Trust Board and how to submit questions.

9. Closure

The Chair extended his thanks to Alex Payne and the Governance Team, as well as everyone working behind the scenes. Organising these events involved considerable effort, and their hard work today in managing and supporting the technology has been invaluable. A significant thank you also goes to all Executive colleagues who have contributed to today's discussions. Their participation and insights were greatly appreciated. He also thanked all members of the public who had attended.

Meeting closed at 11:00 am