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Welsh Ambulance Services  
NHS Trust



• WELSH AMBULANCE SERVICES NHS TRUST •

# Annual Report 2021/22

## Welcome From The Chair and Chief Executive

Welcome to the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust Annual Report 2021/22. It's been another very challenging year for all of us, and the Welsh Ambulance Service has been no exception.

With a combination of the ongoing pandemic, coupled with a return to high levels of our "routine demand" and the impact of the pandemic starting to be felt significantly both by our staff and the wider health and care system, it's fair to say that 2021/22 has not been easy.

We acknowledge that, in the last 12 months, many patients have not received the level of service we aim to provide, nor that they have a right to expect. While the challenges have been acute, we have tried our best to maintain our services, including via support from colleagues in the military, which helped us greatly at times of real pressure.

In amongst the challenges, there have been pockets of real positivity and progress, which you can read about through the course of this document. We've taken a slightly different approach to our annual report this year, which includes this shorter introductory section and more opportunity for you to explore the detail in the main section of the formal annual report.

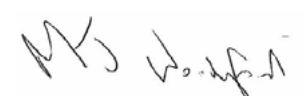
We've also inserted some hyperlinks so that you can jump to the sections of the main document that interest you most, which we hope is helpful.

We continue to build opportunities to engage with our stakeholders, despite the challenges of the pandemic. Our online Board meetings have been very successful in building interest and "attendance" from a range of people, while now that we are starting to emerge from (hopefully) the worst of the pandemic, we are looking at hybrid models of engagement, blending face-to-face with online opportunities, including in our engagement with patients.

If you're interested in finding out more about what's happening at the Welsh Ambulance Service, or are interested in joining a Board meeting or other engagement event, keeping an eye on our social media is a good place to start. You can find us on [Twitter @welshambulance](#), on [Facebook](#) and Instagram.

We hope you find the 2021/22 Annual Report helpful. We're always happy to listen to feedback so, if you have any observations to make, please let us know by emailing [was.communications@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:was.communications@wales.nhs.uk).

Yours Sincerely,



**Martin Woodford**  
Chair



**Jason Killens**  
Chief Executive



## What We Do

We provide healthcare services for people across Wales, delivering high quality and patient-led clinical care, wherever and whenever needed.



### Services include:

- The blue light emergency ambulance services: including call taking, remote clinical consultation, see and treat and if necessary, conveyance to an appropriate hospital or alternative treating facility.
- Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS): taking patients to and from hospital appointments and transferring them between hospitals and treatment facilities.
- The now retired NHS Direct Wales (NHSDW) service: a health advice and information service available 24 hours a day, every day, including an online and telephone offering which was available in Betsi Cadwaladr and Cardiff and Vale University Health Boards for the early part of 2021/22 prior to their migration to the 111 service.
- The 111 service: a free-to-call service which incorporates the NHSDW service and the call taking and first stage clinical triage for the out-of-hours GP service. The number was live pan-Wales throughout 2021/22 and the full service was rolled out in Betsi Cadwaladr and Cardiff and Vale University Health Boards in 2021/22, making the complete service universally available across Wales.
- We also support Community First Responders, Co-Responders and Uniformed Responders to provide additional resources to respond to those most in need of help in our communities.
- During the pandemic, we have provided the Mobile PCR Testing Service for the whole of Wales.

We have continued to run all our services during 2021/22, caring for a range of patients, including those with COVID-19.

You can read more about the services we provide in our Annual Performance Report. ([Click Here](#))



# The Last 12 Months: A Year in Review

In this section, we provide you with some of the key headlines from the year. There's lots more detail in our [Annual Performance Report](#), our [Annual Governance and Accountability Statement](#) and our [Annual Accounts](#).

## Performance

The 2021/22 year has been a difficult one when it comes to our performance. We have done our best to maintain our services but, perhaps inevitably, the impact of the continued COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with a return to in excess of our usual levels of demand, has meant that our performance has suffered.

Our key target set for us by Welsh Government is "Red 8". This is the percentage of Red – immediately life threatening – incidents responded to within eight minutes. Our target is to reach 65% of such calls across Wales within the eight minute window.

Unfortunately, we have seen a continued deterioration in performance against the Red eight minute target, together with lengthening response times in the Amber category of calls, which includes strokes and heart attacks.

The reasons for this diminished performance are many and various. You can read more about the background and reasons in our [Performance Report](#).

We know that the bulk of patient safety incidents occur in the Amber category, and that these long response times directly impact on patient outcomes. We continue to work with partners to improve our performance, impressing upon partners that these are issues for which the entire system is responsible and that we need to act as a system if they are to be resolved.

We did not achieve the Red eight minute 65% Welsh Government target in any month in 2021/22. While the

[Performance Report](#) provides greater detail, there are a number of headline reasons why this has been the case, including increases in Red demand and overall acuity, a loss of capacity through increased sickness absence, and a loss of capacity through hospital handover delays.

Delays at hospitals were extremely challenging in 2021/22. Hours lost waiting to hand over the care of patients to hospital teams were very high prior to the pandemic. The levels seen during the 2021/22 winter were unprecedented. In March 2022, we lost more than 24,000 ambulance hours, equivalent to 48,000 people hours or 4,000 twelve hour shifts. This position has worsened month on month throughout 2021/22, with a total of 191,214 ambulance hours lost.

During quarters three and four of 2021/22, we received military support to help mitigate the loss of capacity. During the pandemic, we also prioritised our conveying capacity (Emergency Ambulances – Eas over Rapid Response Vehicles -RRVs) which influences Red response times.

When dealing with certain patients, including those with suspected or actual COVID-19, staff were also required to don and doff Level 3 PPE in line with Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidance, which can add minutes to the response time.

In relation to our Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS) and Urgent Care Service, demand has



not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Whilst renal and oncology demand has been stable, outpatient demand is down, and discharge and transfer activity has been variable.

A further consideration has been that social distancing reduces the number of patients that can be conveyed per journey. The total number of non-emergency patient journeys undertaken in 2021/22 was 497,570, compared to 433,524 in 2020/21 and 670,353 in 2019/20.

For many of our patients, the first point of contact with the Trust is the 111 service. The 111 number is now operational across all of Wales (as part of the pandemic response), and the full 111 Service is now live in every part of Wales, with the remaining two Health Board areas, Betsi Cadwaladr and Cardiff and Vale, moving across from the NHSDW service in 2021/22, which contributed to the increase in calls. The total number of 111 calls in 2021/22 was 1,031,655 compared to 552,232 in 2020/21.

In the 111 service, we measure the quality of the service we provide through call answering times and clinical ring back times. We aim to answer 95% of calls within 60 seconds and to have an abandonment rate of less than 5%, but the service has been significantly off target during 2021/22. 40% of 111 calls were answered within 60 seconds and 18.6% of calls to the 111 number were abandoned after 60 seconds in 2021/22. As a result of a concerted recruitment and training effort, as well as internal improvement and efficiency work which remains ongoing, the Trust has started to see improvements towards the latter part of the year.

In relation to clinical ring back for triage, the Trust consistently achieves the one hour target of 90% for highest priority patients, 94% in 2021/22, but did not achieve the 90% target for other patient acuity categories.

You can read more about all aspects of performance in our [Performance Report](#).



## Quality

Providing a quality service is very important to us. We are acutely aware that patients have not been receiving the timeliness of service they require, and patient safety has been compromised by a difficult operating environment across the urgent and emergency care system in Wales.

We actively encourage a positive safety culture and see all incidents/events as an opportunity for learning and improvement.

There were 4,558 patient safety incidents, near misses and hazards reported in 2021/22, compared to 2,550 in 2020/21.

We are also seeing higher levels of National Reportable Incidents (NRIs); and also, higher levels of serious incidents referred to health boards for them to investigate. There were 65 patient NRIs in 2021/22, compared with 56 in 2020/21. This is too many and reflects the pressure in the health care system. Most, but not all of these NRIs, relate to our 999 service.

Incidents referred to Health Boards have more than doubled in the last year, reflecting the severe pressures in the system. They are often a result of long waits in the community because of handover delays at hospitals.

There were 184 incidents referred to Health Boards in 2021/22, compared to 72 in 2020/21.

We continue to highlight to the wider NHS Wales system our concerns about the quality of experience which patients are receiving, and hope to make improvements in 2022/23, in line with the rest of NHS Wales.

You can read much more about how we measure quality, what we do when things don't go as planned, and what we are doing to improve matters in our [Performance Report](#).

## Our People

It's been another challenging year for the people who work for us in the Welsh Ambulance Service. Whether working on the frontline as a clinician, call handler or non-emergency team member, or a member of one of our corporate or support teams, everyone has worked hard to deliver for patients at an unprecedented time.

Our staff numbers have grown in 2021/22, largely a result of investment from our commissioners. An analysis of staff numbers by category during 2021/22 is set out below. The figures relate to the average number of employees under contract of service in each month of the financial year, divided by 12 (and rounded to nearest WTE). These figures have been calculated to include inward secondments and agency staff and to reconcile with the financial accounts.

Category	2021/22	2020/21*
Additional Clinical Services	2,064	1,755
Additional Professional, Scientific & Technical	2	1
Administrative, Clerical and Board Members	581	558
Allied Health Professionals	1,052	1,106
Estates & Ancillary	62	62
Medical & Dental	1	1
Nursing and Midwifery	207	170
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,969</b>	<b>3,653</b>

\*Note: The 2020/21 figures have similarly been re-calculated to include inward secondments and agency staff to reconcile with the 2020/21 financial accounts.

## Staff Composition

An analysis of the number of persons of each sex who are senior managers of the Trust (i.e., Non-Executive Directors, Executive Directors, Directors, Board Secretary) as at 31 March 2022 is set out below (excludes secondees out of the Trust). This compares to a Trust-wide staff composition of 49% female, 51% male.

Gender	Headcount	%
Female	7	37
Male	12	63
Total	19	100

Sickness absence has deteriorated since last year. This is in part a result of the rise of the Omicron and BA2 variants of COVID-19, which had a marked impact on our staff in the latter half of 2021/22. It's also symptomatic of what we describe as the "moral injury" staff feel as a result of working under considerable pressure in a log-jammed health and care system. The table below shows this deterioration.

	2021/22	2020/21
Days lost (long term)	100,910.74	65,017.51
Days lost (short term)	50,050.55	31,864.22
Total days lost	150,961.30	96,881.73
Total staff years	329.20	302.85
Average working days lost	23.96	16.79
Total staff employed in period (headcount)	4,231	3,907
Total staff employed in period with no absence (headcount)	1,035	1,496
Percentage staff with no sick leave	24.04%	36.61%

Note 1: The percentage and total number of staff without absence in the year has been sourced from the standard Electronic Staff Record (ESR) Business Intelligence (BI) report. With regard to the reporting in relation to the percentage of staff with 'no sickness', the standard BI report excludes new entrants and also bank and locum assignments. Therefore, the number of staff who have had a whole year with no sickness absence is being divided into a smaller number than the total headcount at the end of the year.

Note 2: "Total staff employed in period with no absence (headcount)" is purely sickness absence and does not include those isolating/shielding due to COVID-19.

We recognise that staff need to be supported, both to regain their health and to feel better about coming to work. We also need to support staff when they are at work to prevent absence becoming an issue in the first place.

Among the actions underway to improve attendance are:

- A project plan for improving attendance has been developed and rollout has started. The plan has seven work streams to deliver, including additional coaching and development for managers to support their teams more effectively
- Sickness audits
- Regular case reviews were undertaken across EMS to discuss complex sickness cases and alternative duties arrangements
- Face to face fortnightly drop in workshops for anxiety, trauma, wellbeing and mental health awareness held in 111/NHSDW and Clinical Contact Centre sites across the Trust;
- Staff continue to utilise and engage with the Employee

Assistance Programme and the Thrive App. Other wellbeing offers such as Silvercloud and Health for Health Professionals are also offered for psychological support;

- Occupational Health and Wellbeing provided ad hoc support to managers and colleagues where colleagues had suffered the bereavement of a colleague
- Our fast track physiotherapy service has continued to see a rise in staff access;
- The 'road to recovery' support group met weekly with a range of invited speakers to offer support to staff who are currently unwell because of long COVID-19
- A fortnightly women's health group (previously menopause café) is held virtually to give information and offer a safe area of peer support to women within the Trust. Speakers in 2021 included the Endometriosis Society, dermatologists, nutritionists and a sleep expert;
- Investment in occupational health and wellbeing in 2021 has allowed an increase in the wellbeing and nursing contingent in North Wales, thus increasing access to face to face services and expansion of the service in this area; and
- Health promotion activities have expanded with regular internal communication campaigns, and the occupational health and wellbeing van visits accident and emergency departments in South Wales weekly, offering TRiM and wellbeing support as well as supporting health campaigns for staff.

During 2021/2022, we launched an Ally Programme to help create a more inclusive, compassionate and culturally responsible workforce in line with the organisation's Strategic Equality Objectives. The programme encompasses allyship to all under-represented groups and



communities and promotes self-guided learning, reflective practice, and courageous dialogue. 93% of staff have completed the Trust's mandatory equality and human rights training, called 'Treat Me Fairly'.

We have continued to support working carers and are an active member of Carers UK's business forum, Employers for Carers. Our membership includes access to [efcdigital.org](https://efcdigital.org) which offers a range of resources that can help us support our staff who juggle work and caring responsibilities. We also have an established Flexible Working Policy to help create a more flexible workplace to enable the recruitment and retention of staff and to facilitate a healthy work-life balance.

Amidst all the hard work, we have taken time to support and celebrate numerous days and events, such as International Women's Day, Black History Month, as well as LGBT History Month and more.

You can read more about what we are doing to support our workforce in our [Performance Report](#).

## Our Volunteers

As ever, our volunteers have provided sterling support to us over the course of the year.

We were pleased to be able to welcome our Community First Responders and Volunteer Car Service drivers back to service and are incredibly grateful for the help they give us in supporting patients.

In addition to some of our very experienced volunteers, we've been delighted to be able to recruit and train some new faces, all committed to serving their communities in whichever way they can.

Our new Volunteer Manager also joined us and together we will continue to advance our volunteering strategy as we move into 2022/23.





## How We Work



Our [Accountability Report](#) contains a wealth of information about how we are governed and the legislative framework in which we operate.

A key aspect of the Trust's accountability and governance is that the Trust is a commissioned service for EMS and NEPTS. The commissioning is undertaken by the Emergency Ambulance Services Committee (EASC), on behalf of Health Boards, who are also supported by the Chief Ambulance Services Commissioner (CASC) and the National Collaborative Commissioning Unit. EASC, and its supporting committees, have continued to meet through the pandemic period.

Similarly, our Board and Committees have continued to meet, with high levels of digital engagement from the public and stakeholders at our Board meetings, which have been held digitally.

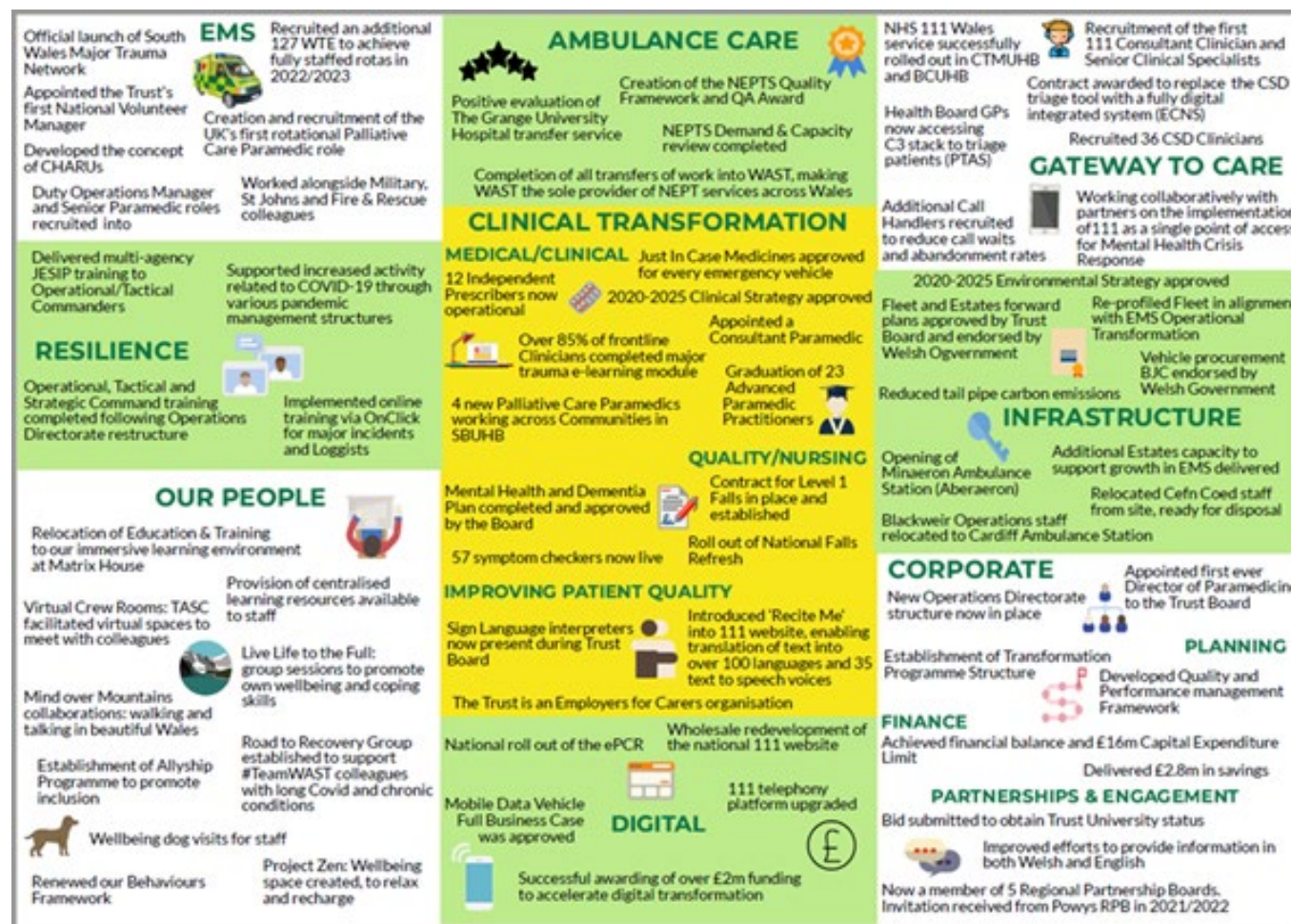
In 2022/23, we will move to a more hybrid approach to meetings to ensure that the benefits of face-to-face engagement, including with the public, are retained.

[You can read more here.](#)

## Highlights

Despite all of the pressures, it hasn't all been bad news. There have been some very positive developments and we have continued to push forward with much of the work we outlined in our [Integrated Medium Term Plan \(IMTP\)](#), which is outlined in the visual below.

In fact, it's been important to keep moving forward. The pandemic has been a catalyst to accelerate some of our developments, and will also shape those developments yet to come. Standing still and awaiting a return to a "2019 normal" has not been an option, as we need to continue to move forward to keep pace with developments and to make improvements for our patients and our people.





This year, we were delighted to be able to reinstate the work of our Community First Responders mid-year, as well as our co-responders in Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

Throughout the year, we have worked closely with a range of partners and stakeholders, some of them well-established, but some more recent, to ensure that the service could continue to maintain its services to patients while maintaining the safety of our people, as Wales remained in the grip of COVID-19.

The Trust also continued working with partners in UK government on the running of mobile testing units and with its established third sector partners, St John Ambulance Cymru.

2021/22 also saw us take some significant steps towards gaining University Trust Status, which will help us redefine our relationships with higher and further education as we move forward into the post-pandemic era, and everything that this will mean in terms of workforce, service configuration, harnessing technology, optimising opportunity for our people and the quality of services we provide to the people of Wales.

Our 'Blue Light Hub' app continues to be recognised as an innovative way to engage with young people about using 999 services.

This recognition resulted in nationwide coverage about the app when we were invited to appear on Crime Watch Live on BBC One. This coverage helped boost app downloads and highlighted the importance of children and young people being confident to access the right service in an emergency.

## The Year in Pictures

We've put together this montage of pictures to give you a visual flavour of our year. From awards to new vehicles, there have been a number of highlights which we hope you enjoy.



## Managing our Money

Our financial performance in 2021/22 was again underpinned by strong financial management, including the delivery of a significant level of savings and achievement of all statutory financial targets, including the payment of invoices within 30 days and achieving a small revenue surplus against the budget.

We will continue to operate in a challenging financial environment and will need to continue to deliver further, and indeed increased, planned savings into 2022/23.

In 2021/22, the Trust achieved all of its financial targets as follows:

	Actual	2021/22
Breakeven - Achievement of revenue financial balance.	Delivered	
CEL - Capital spend equal to, or less than, the WG set Capital Expenditure limit.	Delivered	
EFL - Remain within External Financing Limit*	N/A	
PSPP - 95% of Non NHS invoices by number are paid within 30 days.	Delivered	
*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the EFL requirement continues to be temporarily suspended by Welsh Government.		

At the end of the 2021/22 financial year, we reported a revenue surplus of £0.260m in our audited final accounts. Of this, £0.185m related to the transfer of a donated asset from the Trust's Charity.

We are required to achieve financial breakeven over a rolling 3 year period. The Trust has met its financial duty to break even over the 3 years 2019/20 to 2021/22.



During the 2021/22 financial year, we expended Capital Investment funds of £27.942m in new property, fleet, plant, equipment and ICT, utilising 100% of the Trust's Welsh Government set Capital Resource Limit, without exceeding it. In addition a further £0.029m, being the netbook value of assets disposed of, was also invested, resulting in the total investment of £27.971m.

The Trust is required to pay at least 95% of the number of non-NHS invoices received within 30 days of receipt of goods or a valid invoice (whichever is later). We met this target, paying 97.2% within the specified time.

In respect of our total income, £276.5m was received in year (compared to £241.8m 2020/21), an increase of £34.7m.

Total revenue expenditure increased by £34.6m (14.3%) in absolute terms (2021/22 £276.4m, 2020/21 £241.8m).

In common with other public sector bodies across Wales, the Trust is facing a further challenging year especially with the potential recurrent impacts of the pandemic in the 2022/23 financial year.

To deliver a fully balanced financial plan this has resulted in a requirement to deliver a minimum of a further £4.3m savings via cost reduction, cost containment and cost avoidance schemes in 2022/23.

Full details of the Trust's service, operational, workforce and financial plans are contained within the [Integrated Medium Term Plan \(IMTP\)](#) for the financial year 2022/23, which was submitted in accordance with the NHS Wales Planning Framework to WG in March 2022 with approval awaited alongside other NHS Wales organisations.

You can read all about our finances in our [Financial Statements and Accounts](#).



## A Look Ahead

As we move forward into 2022/23, the outlook is, at best, challenging.

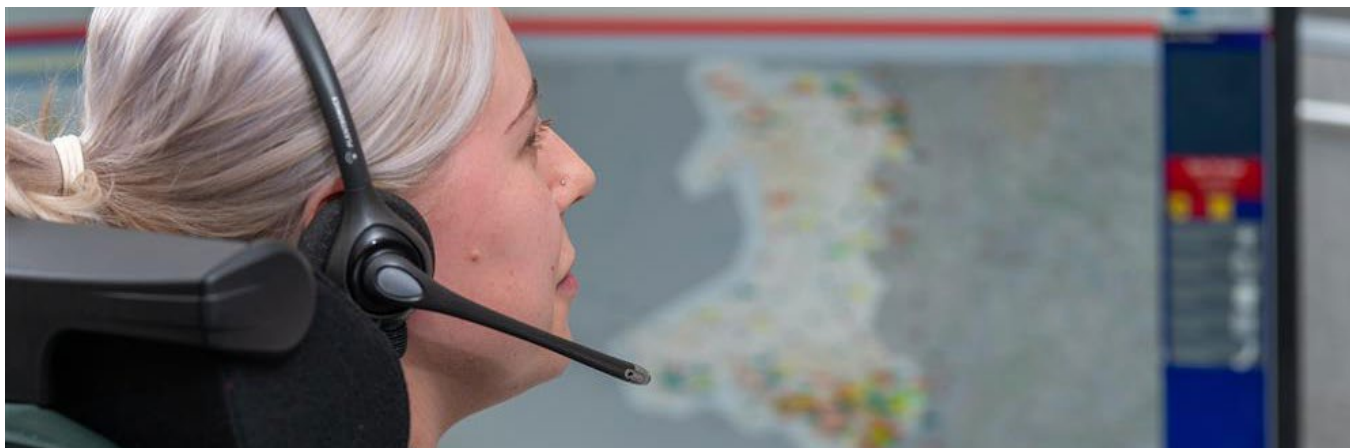
We know that there remains much to do if the health and care system across Wales is to recover from everything the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown at us, and the extended impact it is likely to have on patients and people working in health and care.

We are committed to improving the quality of the service we provide, improving timeliness of response for those most critically in need of our help. But we cannot do this alone and, at the time of writing, discussion continues with organisations across NHS Wales and Welsh Government to identify rapid and meaningful actions to improve the current situation.

We are also looking at accelerating the pace of change across our organisation, building on our [Delivering Excellence](#) long-term strategy.

Our ambition is to ensure most people get the care they need away from the hospital, whether that's by advice on the phone or online, or by clinicians caring for more people at home or on scene. We also want the ability to refer patients to other health services, making things more convenient and appropriate for patients, and reducing the numbers of people we take to hospital.

You will be hearing more about our plans as we move through 2022/23 so please keep an eye on our social media feeds and [website](#) to find out more.



<https://ambulance.nhs.wales/>



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