



Ein cyf / Our ref - MA/EM/0734/22

Chairs

Health Boards

Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust

Emergency Ambulance Services Committee

17 February 2022

Dear Chairs,

I am writing with concern about the ongoing risk of harm to patients who require urgent and emergency care.

The volumes of people waiting excessive periods for transfer from ambulance vehicles to the care of staff in Emergency Departments, in particular, has reached intolerable levels.

Record levels of delays were reported in January resulting in poor patient experience, the risk of poor outcomes and serving to limit the available ambulance capacity in the community to respond to people with, often, unknown clinical needs.

You will be aware that this situation prompted a national health and social care risk summit to be convened by senior Welsh Government officials on Tuesday 15 February 2022.

I am concerned about the level of tolerance to such long delays and require you to take greater ownership of this issue as a priority. I am aware there is a clear link between poor patient flow and blockages at the front door which can result in longer transit times for patients on ambulance vehicles. However, the volumes of people who are medically fit and awaiting transfer from hospital is relatively stable and yet ambulance patient handover delays continue to grow.

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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.

I am aware a commitment was made by Health Boards at a recent meeting of the Emergency Ambulance Services Committee to work towards eradicating all ambulance patient handover delays over four hours. National data show the numbers of people waiting over four hours on an ambulance vehicle is growing, with over 500 people reported to have waited over this period in the past week alone. I expect improvement against this and other key measures from this point onwards and officials will monitor the position closely.

I have asked Stephen Harrhy, Chief Ambulance Services Commissioner, to submit a monthly progress report against the Emergency Ambulance Services Committee (EASC) delivery plan.

Local ambulance patient handover improvement plans have already been requested through EASC and I urge you to ensure these plans are robust with a focus on tangible and rapid improvement. This work should link to broader and immediate action following the national health and social care risk summit.

The current situation cannot continue and I should appreciate assurance around your Health Board's plans to support improvement by no later than 23 February 2022.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services