



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

ATISN 15535

22 October 2021

Dear

ATISN 15535 – Ambulance Service

Thank you for your request to the Welsh Government for information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) received on 23 September. You asked –

- 1) *What measures were put in place last year to alleviate the crisis in the ambulance service?*
- 2) *What is the plan for the next 3 months?*
- 3) *How many visits to the 'front line' has any government minister made, and whom?*
- 4) *What were the waiting times for operation prior to COVID and what are they now?*

Our response:

On Q1, In the context of unprecedented pressures on the ambulance service in July, the Minister for Health and Social Services called an extraordinary meeting of the Emergency Ambulance Services Committee and requested the development of a Delivery Plan which sets out a range of time-bound actions, to be delivered between now and the end of March 2022. Key actions in the plan include:

- Improved forecasting to better understand and plan for actual demand and match resourcing accordingly;
- Continued implementation of recommendations from independent demand and capacity review;
- Ensuring we are able to control the demand on our services whilst ensuring patient are safe and receive the care they need in the place that they need it;

- Health Board Clinicians directly managing ambulance patients and redirecting them to clinically safe alternatives; and
- Using ambulance staff to safely cohort multiple patients, allowing ambulances to return to community response.

Earlier this year, the Welsh Government invested £10.9 million to provide 84 new operational ambulance vehicles, as part of an ongoing programme of investment to modernise ambulance services in Wales.

The Welsh Ambulance Services Trust recruited 136 additional frontline clinicians in 2020/21, significantly increasing the number of frontline staff available across the service to respond to incidents more quickly. The Trust is committed to recruiting a further 127 this year, as part of the ongoing implementation of recommendations from an independent demand and capacity review and 36 posts have been identified for immediate recruitment.

On Q2, The Welsh Ambulance Service will take forward actions from the Emergency Ambulance Services Committee Delivery Plan to help manage 999 demand in the community, increase capacity, improve responsiveness to people with time sensitive complaints and enable rapid improvement in ambulance patient handover.

The Welsh Ambulance Service has been considering a number of options to supplement existing capacity, including exploring options with a number of national agencies. The Trust has already contracted St John Ambulance Cymru to provide additional support over the busy winter months and has also been working with military planners and has taken up the option for military support to the service, through the MACA or the 'Military Aid to the Civil Authorities' process.

On Q3, this information is publically available and therefore has been exempted under Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I have attached a link to where the requested information can be found for your convenience –

[Ministerial meetings and engagements | GOV.WALES](#)

Please note, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we discouraged all but essential visits to health settings given the pressure they were under and to reduce the risk of spread of infection. However, Ministers had a number of virtual meetings with staff or healthcare unions to hear about the experiences faced by staff as well as regular meetings with Chairs and CEOs. Minister did undertake some visits where it could be done in a safe way and as restrictions eased the Minister has undertaken a number of visits to frontline staff.

On Q4, information on waiting times is publically available on the StatsWales website at:

[Referral to treatment \(gov.wales\)](#).

Next Steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ
or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

*Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF*

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely,