

Grŵp Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Dirprwy Brif Weithredwr, GIG Cymru

Health and Social Services Group
Deputy Chief Executive, NHS Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Stephen Harrhy

Chief Ambulance Services Commissioner
Emergency Ambulance Services Committee (EASC)

Our ref: MA/EM/1733/22

6th June 2022

Dear Stephen,

Funding for additional emergency ambulance capacity

I am writing to confirm an allocation of up to £3m additional non-recurrent funding to support an increase in emergency ambulance response capacity in 2022/2023.

The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the NHS, together with increased demand for emergency care, continues to place intense pressure on the NHS, which is most visible in urgent and emergency care services.

We know many factors are combining to create these pressures, including broader system pressures and patient flow challenges, as well as ambulance patient handover delays which are having a detrimental impact on ambulance response times resulting in, at times, poor outcomes and experiences for patients and their families. There are also significant opportunities to improve efficiencies in the use of available resources caused by a range of factors including high sickness absence levels, inefficient workforce practices and staff rostering arrangements which also limit ambulance availability.

Performance is not where we, the NHS or the public want it to be and there is a need for immediate action to increase capacity to reduce risk of harm and improve responsiveness. While the Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care Programme has been established to support service improvement, it will take time for these interventions to mature and secure the necessary change to make a significant difference.

This allocation is, therefore, being made available to secure employment of additional Emergency Medical Technicians, paramedics and Ambulance Care Assistants by the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST); and allow a new 'Cymru High Acuity Response Unit' service pilot and evaluation to be undertaken.

In light of the existing commissioning arrangements for emergency ambulance services, this funding is allocated to EASC, with an expectation funding will be made available to the Trust on a cost-incurred basis.

We expect to see improvement in red and amber category responsiveness as a product of this additional funding, and continuous improvement made by Health Boards in reducing the current unacceptable level of ambulance patient handover delays. We also expect to see progress made by EASC and WAST against five key areas:

- I. Implement staff roster changes by the end of December 2022;
- II. Reduce sickness absence levels in line with the trajectory featured in the WAST IMTP) over the course of 2022/2023;
- III. Reduce 'post-production hours lost' through delivery of further workforce efficiencies;
- IV. Increased 'consult and close' rates where 15% of patients are discharged over the telephone in line with commitments in the WAST IMTP; and
- V. A safe reduction in volumes of people conveyed to Emergency Departments through use of alternative pathways.

The Minister has been clear in her expectation for immediate and sustainable improvement against these areas and I should be grateful if you would outline how you will strengthen EASC's planning, commissioning and accountability approach with Health Board partners and WAST in order to ensure delivery of the levels of efficiency and improvements required. We will seek assurance on progress against all relevant measures during Integrated Quality, Planning and Delivery meetings with you and your team, and WAST.

Given that this funding is being made available on a non-recurrent basis, I should be grateful if you would also provide a clear 'exit strategy' in partnership with WAST to provide assurance on continuity and sustainability of actions for improvement beyond the duration of this central funding allocation.

I have copied this letter to Welsh Government Finance colleagues so that they can arrange for the funding to be issued to Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board as outlined above.

Yours sincerely



Nick Wood

Chair, Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care Programme Board
Deputy Chief Executive, NHS Wales

Cc:

Judith Paget, Chief Executive NHS Wales / Director General, Health and Social Services Group
Jeremy Griffith, Interim Director of Operations, NHS Wales