A REVIEW OF OUR YEAR

April 2019 – March 2020

Unmatched quality of care, every time we touch lives.
Contents

A review of our year at North East Ambulance Service from April 2019 to March 2020.

Welcome 4
2019/20 priorities 5
Calendar 6
Delivering our priorities
Corporate Priorities 8
Quality Priorities 18
North East Ambulance Service 22
Unified Solutions 20
19/20 in numbers 26

Our priorities

Our three strategic aims set out what we want to achieve and underpin everything that we do:

DO WHAT WE DO WELL

LOOK AFTER OUR EMPLOYEES

DEVELOP NEW WAYS OF WORKING
Across the whole year our focus has been to make sure that the care we provide to our patients is the very best it can be. It is clear that we have an amazing team here at NEAS and the dedication of staff right across the organisation is outstanding.

In my first six months I have worked with staff to develop my understanding of where we are with our key priorities and I know you will see some really great examples of this work throughout this report.

The world, including the landscape in which we operate, has changed during this short time and, that has meant that my first few months have been unique and challenging but also extremely rewarding and it is a privilege to be part of this amazing service.

Of course, at the end of this reporting year, the pandemic of COVID-19 had affected us all and this became, quite rightly the key focus of our attention. COVID-19 has had a big impact on the way in which we deliver our services and on how we provide care to patients. Alongside this it has also provided challenges for us in making sure we do all we can to support and care for our biggest asset our highly skilled and hugely committed staff.

I am extremely proud of the way our dedicated teams quickly adapted to changing conditions and requirements, going the extra mile and beyond, to ensure that we remained as responsive as possible to the needs and requirements of our patients, partners and the wider North East.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of our staff and to our NEASUS colleagues, Governors, volunteers, partners and all of you for the support shown to us during 2019/20. This support has helped us to keep our services safe and it has been truly inspiring to see how the commitment shown by our staff and volunteers continues to ensure we are able to do the very best we can for the people of the North East.

COVID-19 is set to be with us for some time to come, and although we hope that the spread is slowed and contained quickly, realistically the road ahead will still be challenging for us all. We continue to plan and prepare for this and will reshape as we learn about the best way to tackle this together.

Our ongoing commitment is that our patients and staff will always be our highest priorities. We will stand in partnership with local and national NHS and social care colleagues to work collaboratively to support the North East through these challenging times. We are committed to continuing to play a key role in the Integrated Care System and Integrated Care Partnerships within the region as we firmly believe that we are stronger together.

I hope you will enjoy reading this report which demonstrates our achievements and challenges in 2019/20.

Helen Ray
Chief Executive

Priorities for 2019/20

**CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- Organisational Sustainability
- Improving Quality & Safety
- NHS 111 and Clinical Assessment Service
- Workforce and Investors in People
- Clinical Care and Transport
- Communication and Engagement

**QUALITY PRIORITIES**

- Develop our just and restorative culture to improve patient safety
- Improve the experience of and care provided to patients with mental health needs accessing our services
- Improving cardiac arrest survival
April
Recruited community ambassadors from ethnic communities to help us share important information about our service.

May
Message in a bottle campaign launched to help people with learning difficulties and dementia.

June
New community paramedic scheme for Berwick.

July
Weardale community paramedic scheme starts.

August
Launch of GoodSam app to improve the chances of survival for cardiac arrest patients.

September
Guy Mallon’s life was saved by quick thinking members of his cycling club.

October
Mini Medics cadet scheme launched.

November
A pilot project to help and treat elderly people who have fallen is extended.

December
Safe Haven receives cash boost to protect the public over festive period.

January
Medical students team up to start region’s first university community first responder programme.

February
New specialist moving team tasked with complex moving and handling incidents.

March
Hundreds of volunteers answer our call to support us during COVID-19.
We want to deliver safe, effective, caring, responsive, well-led and sustainable services, with patients at the centre of what we do.

Improving clinical outcomes for our patients, cultivating a safety culture and progressing the quality of care we give patients from ‘good’ to ‘outstanding’ against the Care Quality Commission’s Fundamental Standards were key milestones in 2019/20. Key highlights include:

- Pathfinder training is now part of statutory and mandatory training for all frontline staff
- Specialist paramedic roles have been introduced to the workforce
- We are taking part in research studies to develop our service
- North Tyneside GP Home visiting service launched
- Community paramedic models introduced

North Tyneside GP Home visiting service launched

Supporting GP practices across the North Tyneside area, the service operates Monday to Friday, 1000-1800 provided by a mix of advance practitioners and paramedics with scope for up to 32 home visits daily. The service kept around 90 percent of patients in the community without requiring ambulance conveyance or attendance at Emergency Department during the pilot. Extending the pilot into a full service is being explored with commissioners.

Community Paramedic Project – Berwick upon Tweed

Significant emergency ambulance travel time can be lost whilst transferring patients to hospital from some of our more rural areas. Three Community Enhanced Care Paramedics were introduced in Berwick in June as a pilot, alongside the usual ambulance resource, to see if they could make a difference. They provide the following support:

- Responding to Category 1 life threatening emergencies
- Partnership work with primary care teams and the minor injuries unit
- Home visits to patients
- An expanded range of medications

In July and August, 70 percent of patients seen by the team were cared for and discharged in the community without the need to travel to hospital. There was an improvement in our response to Category 1 emergencies in the area. The pilot has been received positively by GPs, pharmacists, care homes and the wider health care team and the pilot was fully funded by the commissioners for another 6 months to evaluate it further.

New complex lifting service

We have developed a new model for our bariatric patients and those with complex moving and handling needs following the retirement of the previous specialist bariatric support vehicles.

Six scheduled care vehicles have been modified to transport pre-planned bariatric patients.

Two support vehicles now carry specialist and additional equipment to support front line crews, staffed by a single crew responding to emergency and unplanned incidents.

The first phase has reduced the number of failed or delayed bariatric transport to patients in a pre-planned situation, improving patient outcomes and increasing patient experience.

The model also reduces the risk of potential injuries for staff and time on scene for front line crews, increasing availability of ambulance resources for other patients.
It has been another financially challenging year for the Trust as we continue to develop the services we provide for the people of the North East, whilst dealing with increasing demands for our services, delivering a stretching cost improvement programme, embedding a wholly owned subsidiary company and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our operating income for the year was £148.5 million and end of year cash balance was £11.8 million.

We made capital investments of £10.9m during the year, investing in the replacement of vehicles and equipment and the maintenance and enhancement of our estate and Information Technology.

Our staff are our biggest asset – without their hard work and dedication we would not be able to deliver our desired quality and level of service to the people of the North East.

The importance we place on our staff has meant the creation of a new Board level position, the Director of People and Development, for which we successfully appointed and welcomed Karen O’Brien into the Trust in March 2020.

Our occupational health and organisational development teams have worked hard to support staff throughout the year and have introduced new initiatives and support tools to help staff cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and the very real impact that this can have on their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Throughout the year we reported:
• progress in recruiting and retaining high calibre staff, boosting our workforce with over 100 new recruits,
• We continue to promote our Freedom to Speak Up process and our Guardian reported more people spoke up to raise concerns compared to last year
• staff networks for disabled, Black Asian and Minority Ethnic and LGBT people grew in strength and we continue to ensure these groups of staff have a voice in the workplace, with a growing number of allies across the organisation and initiatives designed to make our organisation as inclusive as possible.
This was our second full year of operating under the ambulance response standards for 999 and it also represented the second year of our four-year investment plan with commissioners, which aims to support us to achieve all four categories of response by year four.

For the second year running, we met our target for reaching the most life-threatening emergencies (category 1).

Whilst we did not meet our response times for categories 2 to 4, additional winter funding enabled us in turn to invest in frontline capacity, which made a significant difference to our ability to respond to patients triaged within these categories during the last quarter.

During the year we implemented new rosters for our unscheduled care service in order to more effectively match demand with capacity following the outcome of our external demand and capacity review. Staff helped to develop rosters themselves and a further demand and capacity review commenced towards the end of the year to provide some verification that the rota matched demand appropriately.

Our Scheduled Care service continued to perform well and we continue to see the benefits of the integrated nature of our service, with Scheduled Care colleagues supporting our Unscheduled Care (999) service during times of pressure.

Our priorities

New discharge vehicles for Northumbria

The demand for same day journeys from Northumbria and North Tyneside hospitals increased over the year. The ability to book transport for pre-planned hospital discharges was limited, which highlighted the need for a dedicated support service in the hospital.

Two additional vehicles were funded over winter to support the increased demand but it was soon understood that the service was of benefit at other times of year. A formal pilot launched utilising five vehicles, primarily dedicated to Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital, focusing on same day discharges. The service will continue to be reviewed moving forward to ensure it effectively supports discharges from Northumbria sites.

New discharge vehicles

for Northumbria

Operation Ealing (Medicar)

This initiative arose out of pressures on both the police and ambulance services to reduce waiting times when both services have to attend the same incident. Starting in May 2019, this pilot aimed to overcome these issues with the Trust and Cleveland Police providing a joint response, operating out of Hartlepool North, covering the Cleveland Force’s whole area.

Initially running on a Friday night 1930-0330, a paramedic works on a Cleveland Police vehicle which is dispatched by the police but with access also to the Trust’s dispatch function. The service attends scenes where both services are required to reduce delays to attendance. This has resulted in being able to release double crewed ambulances from scene or stand them down entirely as the paramedic resource has been able to treat on scene. In June 2019 this won a Gold award for Working in Partnership at the Police ROSE awards and has now been extended to a Saturday night as well.
NHS111 AND CLINICAL ASSESSMENT SERVICE

Our NHS111 and Integrated Urgent Care service experienced a significant spike in demand towards the year-end following government advice to contact the service for COVID-19 related symptoms.

We received almost 10,000 calls per day towards the end of March 2020, resulting in around 2,000 additional clinical call-backs per week - more than double the calls we would usually handle.

We worked quickly to increase our call answer capacity as much as possible and established additional Clinical Assessment Services supported by additional staff to ensure we were able to offer advice and guidance at an increased level.

We generated greater interest in our clinical positions as part of the response to COVID-19, which have previously been challenging to appoint to.

The integrated nature of our 111 and 999 service was hugely beneficial in providing resilience and helped us to cope with demand levels beyond all expectations.

We are beginning to see demand decline in early 2020/21 but continue to bolster our resources and resilience to cope with any further spikes in demand during the year.

Our priorities

Out of hours dental service

In partnership with Dencall, we are now delivering a new dental out-of-hours telephony service which launched on 1 April 2019, offering help and advice to patients who are suffering with urgent dental problems in the evening, through the night and at weekends.

This is the first service of its kind in the UK and covers Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham & Darlington, Teesside and North Cumbria.

Patients with dental concerns ring NHS111, and, where appropriate, will be put in touch with specialists in the out-of-hours team at Dencall.
COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Communicating to a geographically diverse workforce is a challenge and ambulance trusts have some of the lowest levels of engagement across the NHS. In the last year, we have spent some time learning more about some of the challenges and barriers that staff face in communications, which helped shape our digital developments.

We rolled-out our new intranet this year, Siren, on the foundations of the Microsoft SharePoint and Office 365 platforms, which offers greater flexibility for remote workers and better opportunities for collaboration and sharing of ideas, conversations and innovations among our staff.

Planning for further digital innovations continues for the coming year.

With feedback from patients we made several improvements during the year.

- We rolled out a ‘message in a bottle’ scheme to support people living with dementia, people with learning disabilities, vulnerable people and people with communication needs
- Over 400 people attended a dedicated recruitment event for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people to improve how we promote work opportunities to BAME people in the region.
- We improved our patient feedback surveys to capture more information about how we are doing and where patients want us to improve.
- We developed an NHS111 leaflet in twelve community languages raising awareness of the service and availability of telephone interpreters free of charge.

Our priorities

Dementia friendly ambulances

As part of the Trust’s commitment to improve the care of patients with dementia there has been significant work in looking at the design of our vehicles to ensure, where possible, it meets the needs of people with dementia (and other disabilities).

The vehicle specification developed by the Trust, working in partnership with members of the public with dementia and a range of other disabilities, will now be adopted nationally for future ambulance designs.
Quality priorities

CLINICAL EFFECTIVENESS

Improving cardiac arrest survival

Early recognition and access to treatment, early cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and early defibrillation are all key to survival. The ambulance service plays a key part in the chain of survival through the timeliness and quality of interventions provided. A number of initiatives implemented during year are helping to improve the chances of survival for people in cardiac arrest.

- Our Trust’s Charitable Fund has provided the £600 contribution towards Community Public Access Defibrillators (CPAD) purchased in areas deemed to be at higher risk and with low current coverage.
- We’ve supported local communities to install more than 200 more CPADs across the geographical footprint during the year.
- A partnership with Newcastle University has enabled us to enlist the support of medical students as Community First Responders.
- A new cardiac arrest register has been developed to enable us to analyze the care we provide. This work has enabled more focus on training around paediatric cardiac arrest and feedback to clinicians regarding the care provided on scene – including positive areas of practice and areas of learning.

GOODSAM

We introduced the GOODSAM app, which will alert Community First Responders of a cardiac arrest occurring nearby where they can provide prompt resuscitation and defibrillation prior to an ambulance arriving on scene.
PATIENT SAFETY

Develop our just and restorative culture to improve patient safety

A just culture balances an open and honest reporting environment with a quality orientated learning culture. It ensures that safe systems are in place to improve patient safety.

We have supported a number of our people during the year to attend a programme on Just and Restorative Culture and champion organisational developments to embed this at NEAS. Our policies and processes need to be reviewed in line with best practice and involvement from the people who will implement them.

We have changed how we clinically review patient safety incidents and as a result we have seen a reduction in the number of staff undergoing formal disciplinary action in the Trust.

We continue to encourage staff to report patient safety incidents and to celebrate when things are going well by recognising colleagues and submitting ‘excellence reports’. We’ve seen an increase in both during the year.

PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Improve the experience of and care provided to patients with mental health needs accessing our services.

We know that developing staff knowledge and skills around mental health could better support their clinical decision making on scene and ensure more effective referrals to mental health teams and services.

Specialist mental health trainers delivered an innovative programme of education to frontline staff and a six-month pilot ‘A BASIC STEP’ tool gave a framework for them to risk assess patients on scene and communicate their concerns to mental health professionals.

We also introduced greater support to staff, particularly when exposed to a traumatic situation at work with immediate debriefing, further contact and referral into appropriate services.
NORTH EAST AMBULANCE SERVICE UNIFIED SOLUTIONS

Colleagues in our subsidiary company, North East Ambulance Service Unified Solutions (NEASUS), work hard to deliver the right number of vehicles to the Trust each day to support our front-line operations.

NEASUS also experienced increased pressure due to COVID-19 and effectively adapted its working operations to deliver the highest number of unscheduled care vehicles since the company was launched with enhanced deep cleaning for infection, prevention and control.

Last year NEASUS made available every day, for 365 days of the year:

- 125 double crewed emergency ambulances to respond to patients
- 185 vehicles to transport patients to and from hospital
- 8 vehicles to support regional events

To keep our service moving, they also:

- Fitted 2506 sets of brake pads
- Renewed 2207 oil filters
- Changed 25 engines
- Changed 23,172 light bulbs
- Created 28,194 job cards
- Completed 2572 vehicle cleans
- Completed 674 MOTs
Our Year in Numbers
April 2019 to March 2020

510,984
999 calls taken

928,777
NHS 111 calls taken

285,846
Patients taken to hospital

113,465
Patients treated and discharged at home

23,958
Patients treated and discharged over telephone

20,682
C1 emergency incidents reached within target

6,070
road traffic incidents attended

551,562
Patient Transport Service journeys

122,219
Patient journeys completed by volunteer Ambulance Car Service

2,834
Employees

£149.6m
annual income

112
Assaults on staff

600
vehicles

55
stations

3,230
square miles covered

600
vehicles

55
stations

3,230
square miles covered
Our Year in Numbers

- **51**: Qualified paramedics recruited
- **10,500+**: People trained in CPR and using a defibrillator
- **113**: Community First Responders attended 1,369 patients
- **366**: Staff nominated for awards
- **55**: Staff recognised for 1450 total years of service
- **9,400**: Hours volunteered by porters
- **2346**: 999 callers supported to give CPR
- **237**: New cPADs were registered with us
- **914**: Compliments
- **436**: Complaints
- **10**: Serious incidents
- **1,285**: People trained in first aid
- **872**: Staff gained a qualification
- **23**: New defibs partially funded from NEAS Charitable Trust Fund
- **1,810**: Hours vehicle cleaning/ infection control
- **16,613**: Facebook followers
- **15,233**: Twitter followers