

<b>Agenda Item</b>
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<b>Joint Commissioning Committee</b>
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<b>Recommendation 4: Rural Response Options</b>
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<b>Dyddiad y Cyfarfod / Date of Meeting</b>	17/03/2026
<b>Statws Cyhoeddi / Publication Status</b>	Open/ Public
	Not Applicable
<b>Awdur yr Adroddiad / Report Author</b>	Ross Whitehead, Director of Commissioning Ambulance Services & 111
<b>Cyflwynydd yr Adroddiad / Report Presenter</b>	Ross Whitehead, Director of Commissioning Ambulance Services & 111
<b>Noddwr yr Adroddiad / Report Sponsor</b>	Ross Whitehead, Director of Commissioning for Ambulance Services and 111

<b>Pwrpas yr Adroddiad / Report Purpose</b>	For Approval Choose an item.
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<b>Engagement (internal/external) undertaken to date (including receipt/consideration at Committee/Group)</b>		
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<b>Committee / Group / Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
NWJCC Senior Leadership Team	11/03/2026	Noted

<b>Acronyms / Glossary of Terms</b>	
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EMRTS	Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service
JC	Joint Commissioning Committee
NWJCC	NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee

## **1. SITUATION/BACKGROUND**

Members will recall that Recommendation 4 was the development of a commissioning proposal for bespoke road based enhanced and / or critical care services in rural and remote areas to enhance the core service model.

In November 2025, the JC received an update on EMRTS following the conclusion of Judicial Review proceedings. Members highlighted the need to work closely with Llais and ensure meaningful public engagement in shaping any future model, particularly where there were concerns about perceived loss of service.

Members discussed that any new proposals must comply with Welsh Government service change guidance, and should reflect improvements in the wider NHS system, including better ambulance handover times and increased ambulance availability.

While committed to meeting population needs, Members agreed it was appropriate to revisit earlier proposals in light of these operational improvements. They also noted that any future recommendations would need to be considered through the NWJCC Integrated Medium-Term Plan prioritisation process and supported by clear public communication to maintain trust and confidence.

## **2. SPECIFIC MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **2.1. EMRTS Consolidated Base Timeline**

The Wales Air Ambulance Charity has confirmed that the consolidated EMRTS base will not become operational until at least 12 months after planning approval is obtained. Given that planning consent has not yet been secured and commercial discussions remain ongoing, it is anticipated that a consolidated EMRTS footprint will occur in quarter 1 or 2 of 2027/28.

This provides a substantial planning window for the JC to appropriately consider the delivery of Recommendation 4 on its own timeline, without dependency on the EMRTS and Air Ambulance estate programme.

### **2.2. Recommendation 4 Dependency**

The High Court judgment provides clear confirmation that Recommendation 4 sits as a separate and distinct piece of work, not a requirement for or dependency of the EMRTS base reconfiguration decision.

In assessing the relationship between the recommendations, the Court found that "Recommendation 4 genuinely related to a plan sufficiently distinct from the other recommendations to justify separate consideration by the JCC", confirming that it was conceived as its own strand of activity rather than a precondition for other elements of the service review.

Because of this distinction, the Court was explicit that the JC was not required to have the details of Recommendation 4 worked out before reaching a decision of the EMRTS base configuration.

Recommendation 4 can be treated as a standalone programme focused on improving rural and remote ambulance response, and not as mitigation for, or a condition of, changes to EMRTS base configuration.

### **2.3. Performance Delivery**

Members are aware that the phase 2 of the performance framework for ambulance service in Wales was implemented in December 2025. Whilst the framework requires further time to embed, an initial analysis of performance in the published Ambulance Service Indicators does not indicate a clear disparity of performance spilt along rural and urban distributions.

This indicates a need to carefully consider the appropriate actions in response to recommendation 4, in order that it genuinely improves the experience of ambulance service provision in rural areas.

### **2.4. Options**

The following 3 options are set out for Joint Committee consideration.

#### **2.4.1 OPTION 1**

##### **Do Nothing (No Implementation of Recommendation 4)**

Cease development of Recommendation 4. No new rural enhanced or critical care model would be commissioned. Members have previously committed to progressing recommendation 4, therefore this option is provided for completeness.

##### **Advantages**

- No financial or workforce impact.
- Removes complexity from the commissioning portfolio.

##### **Risks**

- Does not address concerns raised in public engagement about rural access.
- Misses an opportunity to improve rural ambulance service provision.
- Creates reputational risk if communities perceive inaction on rural concerns.
- Further legal challenge.

#### **2.4.2 OPTION 2**

##### **Implement the Two Car Enhanced Model (Original Concept)**

Request that the provider implements a service that meets the previously endorsed commissioning intentions.

## Advantages

- Aligns with the previous discussions.
- Demonstrates tangible commitment to delivery of recommendation 4.

## Risks

- No clear evidence that two cars address the core issues raised by communities (which centred on *general ambulance response*, not specialist critical care availability).
- Could unintentionally reinforce the public perception that this model relates to EMRTS base decisions.
- Workforce, cost and operational viability remain uncertain without further modelling.

### 2.4.3 OPTION 3

#### **Re-engage the Public and Develop a Broader Rural Ambulance Improvement Proposal (Recommended)**

Use the period before the consolidated EMRTS base opens to:

1. Re-engage rural communities and Llais to clarify:
  - Recommendation 4 is about improving rural ambulance response, not EMRTS bases.
  - Understand current and emerging rural concerns.
2. Develop a comprehensive rural ambulance improvement proposal, drawing on:
  - WAST rural response assessment.
  - National Ambulance Performance Framework
  - Potential enhancements to recruitment, deployment, pathways, workforce mix, and clinical support
  - Consideration of enhanced cars *only as one option*, not the predetermined outcome
3. Return to JCC in late 2026 with a fully developed proposal.

## Advantages

- Grounded in public feedback and up to date modelling.
- Focuses on the actual problems communities raised: rural delays and access.
- Avoids premature commitment to an untested model (e.g. two cars).
- Consistent with the independence of Recommendation 4 from EMRTS basing.
- Aligns with the JCC IMPT principles and development for 2026-29

## Risks

- Requires structured engagement and clear communications to maintain confidence.
- Some stakeholders may perceive this as slower progress.

Members are asked to discuss the above options and reach consensus on the way forward.

### 3. KEY RISKS / MATTERS FOR ESCALATION

Whilst the legal process in relation to the decision made by the JC in April 2024 has now ended. There is a risk of further legal challenge in relation to the decisions made in response to recommendation 4.

### 4. ASSESSMENT

<b>Objectives / Strategy</b>	
<b>Dolen i Amcan (au) Strategol CBC / Link to JCC Strategic Objectives(s)</b>	Maximise Value
	If more than one applies please list below:
<b>Dolen i Ddeddf Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol – Nodau Llesiant / Link to Wellbeing of Future Generations Act – Wellbeing Goals</b> <a href="#">150623-guide-to-the-fg-act-en.pdf</a> <a href="#">(futuregenerations.wales)</a>	A Resilient Wales
	If more than one applies please list below:
<b>Dolen i Hwyluswyr Ansawdd</b> <i>(Canllawiau Statudol Dyletswydd Ansawdd (llyw.cymru)) /</i> <b>Link to Enablers of Quality</b> <a href="#">(Duty of Quality Statutory Guidance (gov.wales))</a>	Choose an item.
	If more than one applies please list below:
<b>Dolen i Feysydd Ansawdd</b> <i>(Canllawiau Statudol Dyletswydd Ansawdd (llyw.cymru)) /</i> <b>Link to Domains of Quality</b> <a href="#">(Duty of Quality Statutory Guidance (gov.wales))</a>	Effective
	If more than one applies please list below:

<b>Effaith Amgylcheddol/ Cynaliadwyedd (5R) / Environmental /Sustainability Impact (5Rs)</b>	No - Not Applicable
	If more than one applies please list below:

<b>Impact Assessment</b>		
<b>Ansawdd</b> <i>Ydych chi wedi ymgymryd â Sgrinio Asesiad o'r Effaith ar Ansawdd? /</i> <b>Quality</b> <i>Have you undertaken a Quality Impact Assessment Screening?</i>	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Outcome:	If no, please include rationale below:  Not applicable to this specific update report.
<b>Cydraddoldeb</b> <i>Ydych chi wedi ymgymryd â Sgrinio Asesiad o'r Effaith ar Gydraddoldeb? /</i> <b>Equality</b> <i>Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment Screening?</i>	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Outcome:	If no, please include rationale below:  Not applicable to this specific update report.
<b>Cyfreithiol / Legal</b>	Yes (Include further detail below)	
	Legal risk are outlined in the report	
<b>Enw da / Reputational</b>	Yes (Include further detail below)	
	This is a highly sensitive issue that has potential to impact the reputation of the NWJCC	
<b>Effaith Adnoddau</b> <i>(Pobl /Ariannol) /</i> <b>Resource Impact</b> <i>(People / Financial)</i>	Yes (Include further detail below)	
	Work on this area has a significant impact on the capacity of the ambulance and 111 commissioning team, impacting other areas of work	

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The members of the Joint Commissioning Committee are asked to:

- **Discuss** the content of the report.
- **Approve** the committee's preferred option

## 6. NEXT STEPS

- **Work** with the Welsh Ambulance Services Trust and Health Boards to plan and undertake the required engagement.