

<b>Agenda Item</b>
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<b>Joint Commissioning Committee</b>
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<b>Director of Commissioning for Ambulance Services and 111 Report</b>
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<b>Dyddiad y Cyfarfod / Date of Meeting</b>	16/09/2025
<b>Statws Cyhoeddi / Publication Status</b>	Open/ Public
	Not Applicable
<b>Awdur yr Adroddiad / Report Author</b>	Ross Whitehead, Director of Commissioning for Ambulance Services and 111, NWJCC
<b>Cyflwynydd yr Adroddiad / Report Presenter</b>	Ross Whitehead, Director of Commissioning for Ambulance Services and 111, NWJCC
<b>Noddwr yr Adroddiad / Report Sponsor</b>	Huw George, Interim Chief Commissioner, NWJCC

<b>Pwrpas yr Adroddiad / Report Purpose</b>	For Noting 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	04/09/25 10/09/25	Noted

<b>Acronyms / Glossary of Terms</b>	
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ACCTS	Adult Critical Care Transfer Services
ADEs	Accelerated Design Events
CHANTS	Cymru Inter-Hospital Acute Neonatal Transport Service

EMRTS	Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service Review
JC	Joint Commissioning Committee
NEPTS	Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services
NWJCC	NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee
STEMI	ST-elevation myocardial infarction
WAST	Welsh Ambulance Service

## 1. SITUATION/BACKGROUND

The purpose of this report is to update Members of the Joint Commissioning Committee (JC) on the specific areas related to the work of the Director and the team on issues across the commissioning portfolio.

Specifically, this report will update Members on the specific matters for consideration (including progress against strategic programmes from the NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee's (NWJCC) Foundation Plan, high scoring and emerging risks and emerging and future developments) for each commissioned service including:

- Emergency Ambulance Services
- Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services (NEPTS)
- NHS 111 Wales
- Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service Review (EMRTS)
- Adult Critical Care Transfer Services (ACCTS)
- Cymru Inter-Hospital Acute Neonatal Transport Service (CHANTS)
- Spinal and Major Trauma Operational Delivery Networks
- 111 Press 2 and Mental Health Transport

## 2. SPECIFIC MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

### 2.1 Emergency Ambulance Services

#### 2.1.1 New Emergency Ambulance Performance Framework

Following the introduction of the revised ambulance performance framework on 1 July 2025, the Cabinet Secretary for Health announced on 16 July 2025 the implementation of Phase 2 of the New Ambulance Response Model.

Phase 2 of the New Ambulance Response Model in Wales, due for implementation by 31 December 2025, introduces a more clinically focused approach to emergency care by refining call categories and prioritising patient outcomes over response times.

The traditional Amber and Green categories have been replaced with Orange (time-sensitive), Yellow (assess-and-respond), and Blue (non-emergency transport) to better reflect clinical need. Enhanced clinical screening ensures patients with conditions like stroke or ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) receive timely and appropriate care, while the Red category continues to target

life-threatening emergencies. This phase aims to improve resource use, reduce unnecessary hospital conveyance, and deliver better clinical outcomes.

The Ambulance Services and 111 Commissioning Team continue to work with WAST and partners regarding the delivery of Phase 2 of the Ambulance Response Model within the timescale set out above. There remain a number of key risks to delivery of Phase 2 primarily due to the capacity of the external provider to make the required changes to WAST clinical system infrastructure to facilitate the changes in the response model.

### **2.1.2 Ambulance Patient Handover - National Improvement Approach**

Members have previously been updated on the establishment of the National Ambulance Handover Taskforce to lead efforts to improve ambulance handover performance across NHS Wales. The Taskforce is being led by several clinical executives from NHS Wales, and the NWJCC are represented on the Taskforce Board by the Director of Commissioning for Ambulance Services and 111.

Accelerated Design Events (ADEs) have taken place across the 6 Health Boards in Wales with acute hospitals, to explore the opportunities for delivering sustainable improvement in ambulance handover.

Since March 2025, ambulance handover performance has shown measurable improvement across NHS Wales. Key indicators include:

- A reduction in lost ambulance hours, contributing to improved resource availability. July 2025 saw a reduction of 7,250 lost hours compared to July 2024 and was the lowest level of monthly lost hours since July 2021.
- An increase in the proportion of patients handed over within 60 minutes, reflecting enhanced operational efficiency with over 68% of handovers taking place within 60 minutes in July 2025.

Performance remains variable across Health Boards and individual hospital sites, indicating the need for continued targeted support and localised interventions.

The Ambulance Services and 111 Commissioning Team continues to play a central role in supporting the work of the Taskforce, through the provision of data, presenting and supporting facilitation of discussion at the ADEs and working with Health Boards and WAST to ensure the expected improvements to ambulance response manifest.

In response to the significantly reduced total lost hours position, increased system focus and establishment of processes to further mitigate lost hours across NHS Wales, the NWJCC risk in relation to utilisation of ambulance services capacity has been reduced to 20. The Director of Commissioning for Ambulance Service and 111 will continue to review this risk in line with system progress.

### **2.1.3 Manchester Arena Inquiry Assessment (MAI)**

To ensure a comprehensive and transparent evaluation of the R106 WAST Capability Report, the Ambulance Services and 111 Commissioning Team has implemented a multi-faceted review process. This approach is designed to incorporate stakeholder input, legal and expert perspectives, and a structured assessment of the report's recommendations. The process comprises four key components: WAST Presentation and Stakeholder Engagement Workshops, Legal Advice, Independent Expert Review and a Collaborative Assessment Workshop.

A dedicated collaborative workshop took place on 27 June 2025, bringing together a cross-section of stakeholders. A further session is planned for September 2025 with Health Boards and WAST to enable an informed view on each of the outstanding recommendations.

The Ambulance Services and 111 Commissioning Team is in the process of commissioning an independent external review which will focus specifically on whether the recommendations made by WAST are proportionate and appropriate in the context of the MAI.

The objectives of the review are to:

- Support evidence-based decision-making by the JC
- Provide assurance to stakeholders across NHS Wales
- Strengthen the credibility and transparency of the commissioning process
- Inform future investment and planning decisions related to mass casualty preparedness.

## **2.2 Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services (NEPTS)**

### **2.2.1 Capacity Issues**

The NEPTS service across Wales is under significant challenge due to a number of key drivers including but not limited to:

- Health Board reconfiguration of services resulting in increased travel distances for patients
- Significant increases in NEPTS private provider costs, commissioned via WAST
- Increase in complex patient mobilities and patient journey lengths (both discharge and transfer journeys).

As a result, the NEPTS service is having to frequently cancel patient journeys for eligible patients to prioritise the use of resources available.

The NWJCC's Foundation Plan for 2025-26 was developed with a focus on creating capacity through productivity and efficiency improvements. The principles of which are present within the NEPTS Future Vision (2030).

To deliver productivity and efficiency improvements within the NEPTS service, the Ambulance Services and 111 Commissioning Team are working in conjunction with WAST and Health Boards to collaboratively develop and implement solutions. To inform this work, WAST have undertaken a modelling exercise to quantify the

impact on service capacity of various potential decisions that could be taken for discussion with NWJCC and Health Board representatives.

In addition to the above, WAST are working through a complex review of NEPTS rosters with the potential to deliver an increase in the amount of transport capacity within available resources through improved efficiencies.

Following discussions at a previous JC and Collaborative Commissioning Leadership Group meetings, the NEPTS Commissioning Assurance Group has been formally established from 22 September 2025 and will act as the mechanism to work together for collective solutions and improvement of the capacity challenges and co-ordinate the work outlined above.

## **2.3 NHS 111 Wales**

### **2.3.1 NHS 111 Review**

Further work has been undertaken by WAST on the performance of the service's 111 call-handling capacity and a 111 Re-roster Project Board has been established. The focus of this work is ensuring rostering practices are designed and implemented to be as efficient as possible within the resources available to ensure patients have timely access to the 111 service. Additional modelling is ongoing with an external partner and is due to be presented in October 2025.

Following the JC Strategy Session in August 2025, further work is being undertaken by the Ambulance Services and 111 Commissioning Team regarding the strategic direction and priorities for the 111 service including the mapping of the multiple layers of clinical assessment services currently available across Wales to identify areas of duplication and develop proposals for streamlining.

## **2.4 Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service (EMRTS)**

### **2.4.1 EMRTS Judicial Review**

The EMRTS service provides pre-hospital critical care across Wales in partnership with the Wales Air Ambulance Charity. In April 2024, the JC approved a reconfiguration of EMRTS services, consolidating operations into a single base with extended hours, replacing existing bases in Mid and North Wales.

This decision prompted significant public concern, particularly in Mid Wales, where campaigners feared reduced access to critical care. A judicial review was subsequently brought by a member of the public challenging the lawfulness of the JC's decision-making process.

On 19 June 2025, the High Court handed down its judgment that the JC had acted lawfully and rationally in reaching its decision. The JC were informed that permission to appeal this judgment was rejected by the court on the 29 July 2025.

Whilst costs were awarded to the defendants as part of this order the claimant is a person with the benefit of legal aid and as such the cost order is not currently enforceable by the defendants.

An application has been made by the claimant to the Court of Appeal. The Court of Appeal will determine whether the appeal has sufficient grounds to proceed. If permission is granted, the case will move to a full hearing. If not, the legal process will be considered concluded.

The Wales Air Ambulance Charity have expressed their disappointment in this decision to appeal and have raised concerns regarding their ongoing ability to make improvements to the service to attend more life more limb threatening emergencies.

The Ambulance Services and 111 Commissioning Team continue to work with Directors of Corporate Governance, the Wales Air Ambulance Charity and EMRTS on this issue.

## **2.5 Adult Critical Care Transfer Service (ACCTS)**

### **2.5.1 Increased Demand**

In response to Health Board service change and patient need, demand for ACCTS continues to increase as a result there are challenges in delivering the expected core service provision. Given the small size of the service, opportunities for bolstering of ACCTS capacity in 2025-26 are limited. The Ambulance Services and 111 Commissioning Team is working with the service, Health Boards and WAST to find solutions to meet this need.

As part of the development of the NWJCC plan for 2026-27, work will need to be explored to consider the opportunities for expansion of ACCTS' capacity to meet Health Board requirements as part of their strategic service changes.

## **2.6 Cymru Inter-Hospital Acute Neonatal Transport Service (CHANTS)**

### **2.6.1 Clinical Lead Hosting Arrangements**

The Neonatal Transport Service Clinical Leads are currently hosted by NHS Performance and Improvement (P&I). Following changes to the remit of NHS P&I the requirement for a different arrangement for the clinical lead role has been identified. The NWJCC has been asked to consider how these arrangements can be delivered moving forward.

Discussions continue between NWJCC and NHS P&I regarding the future options for hosting the clinical lead roles, including appropriate governance, and funding arrangements.

### **2.6.2 Interim Overnight Model**

Neonatal transfer services are core component of the provision of high quality and responsive neonatal provision. Whilst broader work is currently being undertaken on the provision of neonatal services across Wales, there is a need

to consider and review the delivery of the transfer services in South Wales. The interim overnight model has been in place significantly past the original anticipated timeframe and is not a sustainable solution moving forward.

Following transfer of the service into the Ambulance Services and 111 commissioning portfolio, an assessment of the position and the proposed way forward is being developed by the Ambulance Services and 111 Commissioning Team and the service providers to articulate the current challenges and potential solutions and mitigations.

## **2.7 South Wales Spinal Network**

Engagement and attendance at Delivery Assurance Group (DAG) meetings continues to remain challenging. Efforts are ongoing by the Operational Delivery Network (ODN) with the support of the Ambulance Services and 111 Commissioning Team to improve attendance at future DAGs.

## **2.8 South Wales Major Trauma Network (SWTN)**

### **2.8.1 Access to Benchmarking Data**

In December 2022, the University of Manchester agreed to transfer ownership of the Trauma Audit Research Network (TARN) to NHS England under the Outcomes and Registries Programme. Following a cyber-attack in June 2023, the TARN database was taken offline, accelerating the transition. From 1 April 2024, TARN became the National Major Trauma Registry (NMTR). NHS Wales initiated its Information Governance process in October 2023, and the SWTN went live on the NMTR platform on 28 October 2024.

All Health Boards are now submitting data however due to the delayed start in coding, NMTR faced a six-month backlog, which is now being addressed with priority given to SWTN Q2 cases. A dashboard has been developed to support quality improvement, although the data is not yet validated and lacks injury severity scores.

It is envisaged that information will be available for review at the next Major Trauma DAG meeting in November 2025.

### **2.8.2 Major Trauma Strategy**

The Major Trauma Network Strategy is due to be refreshed. The development of the strategy for the next 5 years of the ODN due to commence Q3 2025-26.

### **2.8.3 Service Specification**

The service specification for the network and the Major Trauma Centre are due for review but on hold whilst awaiting the outcome of the NHS England review of the service specification to ensure lessons learned are reflected within the Welsh arrangements.

## **2.9 111 Press 2**

### **2.9.1 Hosting Arrangement**

Since the establishment of 111 press 2, the service has been delivered by individual Health Boards. National coordination of training, administrative support, and communications support was provided by the former National Collaborative Commissioning Unit, some of this work has continued following the establishment of the NWJCC.

Following transfer of 111 press 2 into the Ambulance Service and 111 commissioning portfolio it has been identified that these activities sit outside of commissioner responsibilities. Discussions are ongoing with Health Boards to identify a lead provider to take on these activities moving forward.

### **2.10 Mental Health Transport**

#### **2.10.1 St Johns Cymru**

St Johns Cymru continues to be commissioned on a fixed term basis to provide additional transport for patients with mental health needs. There has been some feedback from Health Boards regarding provision and how this could be improved within existing funding envelope.

Work is ongoing between the Ambulance Service and 111 Commissioning Team and Health Board Directors of Mental Health to consider revised arrangements to address the issues raised. It's anticipated that this will be implemented during Quarter 3 2025-26.

## **3. KEY RISKS / MATTERS FOR ESCALATION**

### **3.1 New Emergency Ambulance Performance Framework**

Work required with Welsh Government colleagues to ensure the successful implementation of the Phase 2 of the evolved clinical response model by 31 December 2025.

### **3.2 Ambulance Patient Handover - National Improvement Approach**

Utilisation of commissioned ambulance capacity remains a high risk for the NWJCC. This has been closely monitored and due to ongoing improvements in handover delays across Wales the risk score has been recently reduced from 25 to 20 due to a reduction in the likelihood of recurrence.

### **3.3 Manchester Arena Inquiry Assessment**

There will likely be an expectation from the Inquiry for services to report back on their progress with the recommendation, this is likely to attract both media and political attention.

### **3.4 NEPTS Capacity Issues**

Increased costs and service demand are impacting on WAST's ability to provide sufficient capacity to support planned care, enhanced care and discharge and transfer journeys.

### 3.5 ACCTS Increased Demand

Work to continue with the service and HBs to find solutions for enhanced and critical care transfers, efforts will focus on expanding ACCTS' capacity to meet HB requirements in 2025-26 to support the wider system.

### 3.6 Neonatal Transfer Services

There are a number of sustainability risks in relation to neonatal transfer provision that require resolution, including hosting of clinical leads and overnight provision.

## 4. ASSESSMENT

Objectives / Strategy	
<b>Dolen i Amcan (au) Strategol CBC / Link to JCC Strategic Objectives(s)</b>	Facilitate Integration
	All JCC strategic objectives are applicable.
<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 Healthier Wales
	If more than one applies please list below: A more equal Wales.
<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>	Leadership
	If more than one applies please list below: All enablers of quality are applicable.
<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>	Safe
	If more than one applies please list below: All domains of quality are applicable.
<b>Effaith Amgylcheddol/ Cynaliadwyedd (5R) /</b>	No - Not Applicable
	If more than one applies please list below:

<b>Environmental /Sustainability Impact (5Rs)</b>	
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<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: This is an update from the Director of Commissioning to the Committee.
<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: This is an update from the Director of Commissioning to the Committee.
<b>Cyfreithiol / Legal</b>	Yes (Include further detail below)	
	This report aims to update members, but all decisions are subject to legal recourse e.g. the Judicial Review information.	
<b>Enw da / Reputational</b>	Yes (Include further detail below)	
	Ambulance services are regularly in the media and subject to scrutiny and discussion.	
<b>Effaith Adnoddau</b> <i>(Pobl /Ariannol) /</i> <b>Resource Impact</b> <i>(People / Financial)</i>	Yes (Include further detail below)	
	The report identifies areas where resource impacts are likely to be required and therefore further work is required to present at future meetings.	

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Joint Commissioning Committee are asked to:

- **Note** the report.

## 6. NEXT STEPS

Ongoing work for each item will progress as described in this report, the JC will be kept updated.