



## Post-EMRTS Service Review

### Communications and Engagement Strategy Overview

This document offers a high-level overview of the Wales Air Ambulance Charity communications and engagement strategy following the EMRTS Service Review decision.

The Charity's extensive strategy was developed with the engagement and input of key personnel from the Charity and other key stakeholders. It has been signed off by the Charity's Board of Trustees and is now being implemented.

**Please note: this is not the Charity's strategic document.** This is a brief overview of the strategy for the information of the Joint Commissioning Committee. The full strategy document and aligned implementation plan will remain internal to the Wales Air Ambulance Charity as it contains content that is deemed commercially sensitive.

Key to the implementation and success of the strategy is the close collaboration that exists between the Charity and EMRTS. The Charity is incredibly grateful to EMRTS and its employees for their support and willingness to be involved in communications and engagement activities and campaigns.

This document should be read in conjunction with the EMRTS Service Development Communications and Engagement document presented to the JCC along with this paper.

As requested by the office of the Chief Ambulance Services Commissioner, this brief overview is presented using the Government Communications model known as OASIS.

**Objectives**

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## 1. Introduction

### The Wales Air Ambulance Charity and EMRTS

Through its exclusive relationship with NHS Wales, the Wales Air Ambulance Charity has a highly effective partnership with EMRTS, and the objectives of both organisations are aligned.

EMRTS is commissioned, by NHS Wales, to continually evaluate the service and identify opportunities for improvements – in particular, expanding equity of access to its advanced critical care.

The Wales Air Ambulance Charity has a commitment to its supporters to maximise the impact of their donations, ensuring that as many people as possible, as equitably as possible, across Wales benefit from the service's advanced critical care.

The Charity's mission and vision statements are as follows:

**Mission** - To deliver lifesaving, advanced medical care to people across Wales, whenever and wherever they need it.

**Vision** - To improve the lives of patients and their families by being a world leader in advanced, time-critical care.

### EMRTS Service Review

An independent Review of our NHS partners, led by the Chief Ambulance Services Commissioner, revealed that there are opportunities to improve our service for patients across Wales.

The Review found that:

- Right now, we are not getting to around 2 to 3 people a day. These patients will be in a life or limb-threatening situation.
- People in northern parts of Mid Wales and North Wales do not have a localised air ambulance service overnight. They rely on a nighttime service from South Wales.

To put that into context, in the 18-month duration of the EMRTS Service Review there were 310 life and/or limb-threatening incidents across Powys and North Wales, between 8pm and 2am, that we were unable to attend.

- The service's highly skilled medical teams based in Welshpool and Caernarfon are underused.

Again, to put this into context, during 2023 there were 98 days where our crews in Caernarfon did not see a patient. In Welshpool, it was 79 days without patient contact. Compare this with our crews in Dafen (15 days) and Cardiff (3 days), you can see the significant underuse of our current resources in Caernarfon and Welshpool. This pattern is consistent year on year, as highlighted in the Commissioner's report.

In April 2024, a majority approval of the Commissioner's recommendations from the Joint Commissioning Committee will now see improvements made to the current air ambulance service in Wales, starting to address the above issues.

### **What will the improvement look like?**

- The current resources in Caernarfon and Welshpool will come together in one base location in the middle of North Wales, near the A55.
- Two teams who can respond by road or air will operate from the new base. To meet the pattern of demand, one team will operate between 8am and 8pm and another team will operate between 2pm and 2am.

This means two crews, two aircraft, and two rapid response vehicles - the same resources currently deployed in Mid and North West Wales - will operate but they will be able to save more lives through a change in the way they operate.

### **How will this improve the air ambulance service?**

- We can attend more patients. This means more lives could be saved.
- Northern parts of Mid Wales and North Wales will get an overnight service closer to them, rather than relying solely on the current single overnight crew based in Cardiff.
- We are making better use of our resources and using the public's generous donations more effectively to benefit more people.

## **2. Objectives**

The Charity's strategy has several objectives. They include:

- Effectively addressing how the service operates.
- Effectively communicating the service improvement (what will happen, why it is happening, what benefits it will bring).

- Offering regular Communications regarding progress toward a new base location.

Each objective has a series of clearly defined goals and an aligned implementation plan.

### 3. Audience Insight

People in both Mid and North West Wales are generous supporters of the Charity, with more income per capita coming from these areas than most other parts of Wales. Their passion and commitment towards the Charity are unquestionable and it is something we are incredibly grateful for.

It is this passion that has driven the public conversation during the EMRTS Service Review. We also recognise and empathise with sentiments expressed about perceived poor healthcare provision within these regions. On many occasions, it has been suggested that the reason Wales Air Ambulance is so important is because wider health services are either underperforming or are not there at all.

To set the strategic objectives, it was important to identify the key learning points from the EMRTS Service Review (informed by direct charity interactions and the Commissioner's series of three separate periods of virtual and face-to-face public engagement over a period of twelve months).

During the Review period, we identified the need to deliver enhanced communications explaining the operational and medical delivery of the service, and the impact for patients. Knowing how our service currently operates is vital to understanding how the service reconfiguration will bring the evidenced benefits.

Key areas include:

- **'Road Ambulance in the Sky' to 'Mobile Emergency Department'** – We need to effectively communicate how our service has evolved since the introduction of EMRTS, and how it has positively changed the care we deliver and the patient pathway.
- **Welsh Ambulance Service and Wales Air Ambulance** – We need to effectively communicate the relationship between the Welsh Ambulance Service and Wales Air Ambulance, how we engage with each other, and our roles in the chain of pre-hospital critical care.
- **Regional Service vs All-Wales Service** – Another vital key message is the pan-Wales delivery of the service. Wales Air Ambulance is a scarce, highly specialist resource and our crews, regardless of where they are based, will travel the length and breadth of the country to deliver our advanced lifesaving care.

Aligned with the points above are the regular questions we are asked about the 'Golden Hour'. The concept of the Golden Hour was addressed in the Commissioner's Phase 2 Report (page 30) and this content will be used, along with the service delivery explanations above, to offer much-needed reassurance that the service improvement will not bring any unintended negative consequences for communities across North West Wales and northern parts of Mid Wales.

The Charity's strategy includes a comprehensive stakeholder analysis. Below is a broad overview of the stakeholder analysis categorisation.

**Internal Communications** – Internal Communications refers to:

- Wales Air Ambulance Trustees / employees / volunteers / Patron / ambassadors
- EMRTS employees
- Gama Aviation employees

**Stakeholder Communications** – Stakeholder Communications refers to engagement with individuals and organisations that have a stake in the operational and/or strategic development of the service. These include:

- Registered Charity supporters (individual and corporate)
- Wider NHS Wales individuals, groups and organisations
- Political representatives
- Aviation-related organisations
- Appropriate medical networks/Representative organisations
- Fellow emergency services

**General Public Communications** – General public communications refers to engagement with the people of Wales (directly and through traditional media outlets).

Respecting the independence of the Commissioner's Review process, the Charity remained silent for the eighteen-month duration. This restricted our ability to address questions or correct misunderstandings about the service and the purpose of the review.

As a result, the Charity's strategy recognises the significant work that lies ahead to offer reassurance and build trust within the communities that have expressed concern. Therefore, the strategy, and its subsequent plans, will be continuously reviewed and updated in the months and years ahead.

The Charity, working in partnership with EMRTS, will strongly emphasise its ongoing and unwavering commitment to communities across Mid and North West Wales.

## 4. Strategy

To achieve the objectives above, the Charity has a robust strategy in place to enhance its communications and engagement efforts following the JCC decision in April 2023. This strategy is multi-faceted and includes a coordinated and consistent response involving front-facing departments within the Charity, such as fundraising, retail, corporate communications and HR (including volunteering).

The strategy will be implemented, and further communication and engagement plans developed, in close collaboration with EMRTS.

In summary, the two core elements that underpin the strategy are as follows:

- The use of a blended communications toolkit that includes online content but also has a strong emphasis on physical content, traditional media and face-to-face engagement.
- Engagement with trusted community members/organisations to support communications (and to advise on effective methods of communications).

For many people, both internally and externally, this is an emotive process.

As mentioned, in the communities where concern has been expressed, health provision is a topic of conversation that evokes passionate responses. For some, the physical process of moving a base location is perceived as taking the service away from a particular area. It is vital that we address this, pro-actively and reactively, in a timely way.

Reassurance is paramount. Patients do not come to us. We go to them. This is a service improvement that will benefit the whole of Wales, with specific benefits for the northern regions of Wales with the introduction of a more localised air ambulance service overnight.

## 5. Implementation

Below is a very broad overview of the communication methods (content creation and delivery) that will be used to convey key messages relating to the Charity's strategic objectives.

The strategy has extensive and clearly defined targets and content development plans associated with the points below which are already being implemented.

- Regular internal communication and engagement.
- High visibility – face-to-face (event attendances, talks etc).
- Online and offline campaigns.

- A variety of clear and concise content (brochures, online information, videos, animations, case studies etc.).
- Stakeholder re-engagement.

## 6. Scoring/Evaluation

There are several methods by which the Charity will evaluate the strategy.

At a high level, this includes:

- Monitoring levels of income generation.
- Feedback from our annual supporter and volunteer surveys will indicate regional sentiment towards the Charity and their understanding of our service.

Other more specific evaluation methods will be used to appraise individual online and offline campaigns within the strategy and implementation plans.

## 7. Additional Information

The variety of content that has already been created in recent months, aligned to the service's key messages, includes the following (most of the content below is also available in the Welsh language):

- **Brochure**  
[‘A New Future Saving More Lives’](#)
- **Microsite (including an expanding FAQs section)**  
[Service Improvement | Home | Welsh Air Ambulance Charitable Trust \(walesairambulance.com\)](#)
- **Critical Care Hub Video**  
[Critical Care Hub \(youtube.com\)](#)
- **Nick’s Story**  
[Nick Williams ‘forever indebted’ to Wales Air Ambulance \(youtube.com\)](#)  
[Nick Williams | Welsh Air Ambulance Charitable Trust \(walesairambulance.com\)](#)
- **Craig’s Story**  
[Craig Harrendence's Story \(youtube.com\)](#)

[Craig Harrendence | Welsh Air Ambulance Charitable Trust \(walesairambulance.com\)](http://walesairambulance.com)

- **Sinead's Story**

[Sinead's Story \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

[Mother-of-one "wouldn't have survived" without all-Wales Charity | Welsh Air Ambulance Charitable Trust \(walesairambulance.com\)](http://walesairambulance.com)

- **Josh's Story**

[Josh Tayman \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

[Josh's Story | Welsh Air Ambulance Charitable Trust \(walesairambulance.com\)](http://walesairambulance.com)