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Welsh Ambulance Services  
NHS Trust

# New Clinical Response Model National Pilot from October 1, 2015

## Information for the Public



This information has been written to help you understand how we are changing and improving our services.

**Q: Why is the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust (WAST) changing the way it responds to 999 calls?**

**A:** Since 1974 ambulance services have been measured on the time taken to reach emergency 'blue light' calls. A lot has changed since then. Now, the ambulance service provides much better treatment and care but the way our performance is measured hasn't changed and there is still a focus on how many ambulances arrive at calls within eight minutes, regardless of the care and treatment provided to patients.

**Q: How is the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST) changing?**

**A:** Our role is to deliver a range of services – some of these are delivered over the telephone and some of these are delivered by highly-skilled clinicians coming to see patients face-to-face. We are moving away from time-based targets to look more at the quality of care provided, which may be delivered over the telephone or face-to-face.

Our new clinical response model, which will be piloted across Wales from October 1, 2015, includes up to 120 extra seconds to assess the caller's clinical needs before deciding to send an ambulance. This means patients will:

- Get better advice;
- Be more involved about decisions about their care;
- And there will be more ambulances available for those who truly need them in life-threatening situations.

Giving an extra 120 seconds for call handlers in our clinical contact centre is similar to what two ambulance services in England have done as part of a successful pilot to change the way they respond to emergency calls.

**The only difference will be that we will dispatch the right vehicle and crew for the caller's need.**

### **Q: What if I need an ambulance urgently?**

A: Waiting for an ambulance to arrive is a very stressful and frightening time. Our call handlers provide advice on what to do when the ambulance is on its way but when you are worried about a loved one, minutes seem like hours.

In life-threatening situations like a cardiac arrest, we'll arrange the fastest response possible. Our paramedics and other ambulance crew members will continue to deliver life-saving care for you in the community and on your way to hospital.

For less serious conditions, we will provide bespoke care and treatment for your condition – ensuring you are cared for in the most appropriate place.

For some conditions, specialist treatment is needed in hours rather than minutes, so we may take a little longer to assess you and then get you to the right place for your care and treatment. In these cases, our ambulance crews will carry out a detailed clinical assessment and once we've determined the cause of the patient's condition, our role will be to transport the patient quickly to the right specialist centre for their needs. For example, for people having a stroke, we will transport them to those hospitals which have the facilities to provide a CT scan and rapid treatment – if the stroke is caused by a blood clot, you may need some medicine to help you.

Other conditions may need treatment at the scene from our paramedics and may not require onward care at hospital. Less serious conditions may be managed by expert advice and support from our experienced clinicians over the telephone and we may often be able to manage to avoid a trip to hospital by working with other health services in your community who can look after you.

We will measure this work to see how well we are doing and will share this information with you.

### **Q: If I need an emergency ambulance, how will I know when it will arrive?**

A: We are introducing new ways to give our callers much better information on where the ambulance that is responding is coming from and how long it will be. This is similar to text systems that other services use (like the RAC and AA).



## Q: What does this change mean for me in my local area?

A: It's very important that you have confidence in us as your ambulance service, as part of this new clinical response model; you'll be able to see how we are doing in treating you, by looking at different measures you will be able to judge the quality of the service we are providing in your community.

## Q: What do the public need to do to help this change?

In order to make sure we provide the right treatment for the condition that you're calling us about, there are things we need to do.

We should think before dialling 999 – remember that once an ambulance is sent to you, there may not be one available for a more serious problem in your community.

When you make a 999 call our call takers will assess what is wrong and make a decision about the appropriate service that you need. With our new clinical response model, this may include you being contacted first by a nurse or paramedic in our clinical contact centre to give you advice on what to do while you are waiting for an ambulance to arrive. You may also get advice to look after yourself at home or, after a discussion with a nurse or paramedic, a joint decision that you can make your own way for treatment.

If your condition isn't life-threatening, please think whether another health service, such as NHS Direct Wales (**0845 46 47**), your local pharmacy, your GP surgery or the out of hours service can provide more appropriate help and care for you. This will help us to free up resources to make sure patients in a life-threatening situation get a faster ambulance response.

Information on local health services in your area is available on the [NHS Direct Wales website](#).

**Choose Well** will help you decide if you need medical attention if you get sick and where to go to get help. It explains what each NHS service does and when it should be used.

[Download the app](#) for your mobile phone so that you can find the right service wherever you are.

You can test your knowledge of using the NHS wisely by [taking a Choose Well quiz](#) on the NHS Direct Wales website.



**Q: It sounds as though the new clinical response model will also improve efficiency?**

A: We expect a reduction in the double response rate. This is when we have to send two ambulance resources to one call in order to meet the eight-minute target. This might mean that a paramedic in a car is sent when what is really required is an ambulance to take the patient to hospital. This is especially important in heart attack and stroke calls where being taken to a hospital that provides the right treatment is vital.

[Read more](#) about common 999 calls and stories from people who have used the Welsh Ambulance Service.

Please visit the [Welsh Ambulance Service website](#) regularly over the next few weeks for more information on the new clinical response model national pilot starting on October 1, 2015.

If you would like to give feedback on this document or any aspect of your experience of using the Welsh Ambulance Service, email us at

[ppi.team@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:ppi.team@wales.nhs.uk)

or visit the [Have your Say](#) section on the website.

