



meeting	EMAS SELECT COMMITTEE		
date	16 July 2007	agenda item number	

Joint report of the Chair of the EMAS Select Committee and the Head of Scrutiny

Feedback from Scrutiny Visits and Programme of Work

Purpose of report

1. To provide the EMAS Select Committee with the opportunity to consider issues arising from the recent programme of visits to EMAS Control Centres and to develop a programme of work.

Background

2. At the meeting on 14 May 2007 Members identified a number of options to collect evidence as part of the Review.
3. A programme of visits to EMAS Control Centres was organised for Members of the Select Committee. The following visits have taken place:

Nottingham

18 June	Cllr Brian Wombwell	Matthew Garrard		
25 June	Cllr Parry Tsimbirdis	John Rose		
2 July	Cllr Sue Saddington	Cllr Mrs Kay Cutts	Cllr Ellie Lodziak	
9 July	Cllr Ken Bullivant	Cllr Andy Freeman	Cllr Joe Lonergan	Cllr Chris Winterton

Lincoln

18 June	John Rose	Paul Glazebrook	
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Northamptonshire

2 July	Cllr Brian Wombwell		
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Issues

4. Members have been invited to provide feedback to the Select Committee from the above visits. Any written feedback that has been received has been included at Appendix 1.
5. At the time of publishing, the final visit of the programme had yet to take place; any written feedback from that visit will be circulated to the Select Committee prior to the meeting.
6. The Select Committee may also wish to receive oral feedback from Members and discuss any issues that arise.
7. Discussions are currently taking place to provide Members with the opportunity to go on call with a response vehicle. The Select Committee may wish to consider the need for any additional visits to collect evidence.
8. A draft programme of work based on the areas identified by the Select Committee is included at Appendix 2.

Recommendations

9. It is recommended that the EMAS Select Committee
 - i. consider the feedback from Members from Scrutiny Visits to Control Centres and identify any areas where further information is required
 - ii. identify further visits that are required and
 - iii. agree the programme of work

Councillor Chris Winterton
Chair of the EMAS Select Committee

Lynn Senior
Head of Scrutiny

Visit To EMAS Headquarters at Beechdale Road Nottingham
Notes by Cllr. Brian Wombwell

EMAS - Mick Barnett Connolly, Ahmed Belim and Peter

The Service is undergoing major changes following the merger of the various regions into the new EMAS.

We were assured that where best practice has been identified within each region this has been rolled out across the new organisation.

EMAS has bought a new building at Nottingham Business Park and is in the process of equipping it with the latest technology and they hope to move by the year end.

Staff will require training with the new equipment and an exit strategy for moving the organisation into the new building is being formulated to minimise disruption to services.

The move is necessary because the extra workload due to the merger has meant taking on extra staff so the building is no longer big enough.

They have been awarded extra money and are to recruit and train extra staff during the next few months ready for the move to new premises.

In the recent past there had been problems with compatibility with communications equipment between the various emergency services and between the various Ambulance Service regions but this has now been resolved except for one two anomalies which are being investigated.. The Emergency Services have now been equipped with digital radio systems.

Items of equipment are gradually being standardised throughout the EMAS region so that all staff are familiar with usage. This is also helping to make savings in relation to procurement.

The target response times are not a problem in the city but rural areas do present a problem due to distances involved. This problem is being tackled by analysing the statistical information taken from recent historical records to predict where incidents are likely to occur and ambulances are deployed locally at stand points in anticipation. This is called Dynamic Deployment.

In order to further cut response times a vehicle is despatched to category A incidents immediately the address is known and whilst the operator is taking down the details.

An electronic display in the call centre shows the current days efficiency score which is updated every few minutes so that all members of the team are aware of their performance.

The service has a number of options available to attend incidents i.e. two man ambulance, fast response vehicle with one man paramedic or ECP, or local community / corresponder. The computer system determines the need from the questions posed by the operator and this is then passed to the despatcher who considers what vehicles are closest and/ or available. Whoever gets to site first will assess the situation and proceed with treatment whilst information the despatcher whether further assistance is necessary. Where possible the paramedics can treat the patient at the site to save transferring to a hospital.

This saves ambulance time transferring the patient to hospital and alleviates waiting times at A&E departments.

EMAS plans to reduce the number of two man ambulances and increase the number of smaller fast response vehicles. This will increase the efficiency in response times. This will also reduce fuel and maintenance costs.

The question of infringement of speeding laws came up which is an anomaly considering the target response times. We were told that the police have drastically reduced the number of prosecution notices sent to the ambulance service but valuable staff time was still being wasted by some forces continuing the practice. The staff have to confirm to the police that the vehicle is an ambulance and that it was proceeding to an incident. The notice is then withdrawn.

We were also told that the police often fail to back up ambulance crews when requested to do so especially in Notts. This is required when there is a potential danger to the crews e.g., forced entry into property required, domestic violence, drunks, dogs etc. This can severely effect response times and crews are not trained for these situations and do not have authority. Note Derbyshire police always respond.

EMAS are also agreeing new shift patterns with staff. As an alternative to managed work times they are offering established teams to create and own their own shift patterns working 12 hour shifts incorporating their holiday entitlement. This is increasing efficiency across the system and is proving popular amongst the staff.

When asked about using green bio fuel on new vehicles we were told that this has not been considered but would be raised in the future. Their usage of fuel is huge and this should be a priority.

Non emergency transport of patients to and from hospital. This service is being re organised so that it can provide a more economical service and be better suited to the patient to reduce travelling time and waiting as much as possible. This service is operated separately to the Emergency Service

The staff were very cooperative throughout the visit and appeared to be very professional and happy in their work.

The last two months figures averaged across the region showed

Cat A 8 minutes	79.9% (required 75%)
Cat A 19 minutes	97.8% (required 95%)
Cat B 19 minutes	93.6% (required 95%)

The rural areas expectedly had the worst figures at A8 with Leics & Rutland at 71%, Lincolnshire 73% but these are only marginally below requirements. Improvements are expected as the new systems and equipment is brought into practice.

Conclusion

The service is undergoing massive change and is reinventing itself with more sophisticated equipment and more efficient working practices. The new building and increased staffing levels should also have a positive effect on performance.

It is obvious that the service cannot be effectively assessed at this time. It would make more sense to wait until the new building has been commissioned and the new systems have been embedded. The performance levels can then be evaluated properly.

Visit To EMAS Headquarters at Beechdale Road Nottingham
Notes by Cllr. Sue Saddington

I am reassured that measures are in place for answering 999 calls and ensuring the quick arrival of ambulances.

EMAS now operates 12 hour shifts - that have been welcomed by staff as they generate extra days off during the week however I am concerned that the intense operation by staff could generate pressure in the long term. There were remarkably few operators at the control centre for such a large organisation and it was reassuring that it worked well, however this might also contribute to long term pressure on staff due to the intensity of the shifts staff work.

Systems seem to work and new systems such as communications are improving co-ordination and staff feel that they are working as more of a team.

The visit identified a need to visit the new control centre

Issues were also raised around passenger transport and whilst that does not form part of this review it could be an area for future scrutiny

Visit to EMAS Northamptonshire on 2nd July 2007-07-02
Notes by Cllr. Brian Wombwell

I met Chris Gaskill General Manager
and Rowen Roberts

Their area is split between Northants and South Bucks and they in the process of joining these together. The whole area is much smaller than Notts. They will be moving their operational headquarters in the near future.

They are included in the major changes and reorganisation of EMAS but they assured me that this is not affecting the efficiency of the service that they provide.

They are benefiting from the rollout of “best practice” and are taking a full part in the meetings of regional staff.

Northants has communication problems between ambulance crews and some of the other regional Despatch Operators but they have procedures in place as a temporary measure and the problem will be resolved in May when the new digital radios are available.

All procurement is through the central agency so all equipment is becoming standardised throughout the service.

The target response times are not a problem in Northants. They have been operating Dynamic Deployment for two years and it is embedded in their systems of operation.

They have approximately 90% ambulance to 10% fast response vehicles but they are hoping to change this to 60% 40% during the next 12 months.

The system of operation is basically the same as Notts. with a call receiver asking the questions and a dispatcher in control of the vehicles.

As with Notts they have a variety of options for response.

They do not now have a problem with speeding fines from the police.

They have a major problem with police back up except when they issue an emergency call. This situation is mirrored in Notts and should be a major issue. One initiative they are trialling is to pair up with police officers on Friday and Saturday nights to attend known trouble areas. They also said that EMAS have a list of potentially violent people and the police have a list but they are not the same so medics can attend incidents not knowing that they are at risk.

They have copied the alternative Shift pattern option adopted by Notts where teams are able to sort out their own arrangements. They say that this has led to an increase in efficiency and vehicles are available when required.

When asked about bio fuel they had no answer and this has not been considered.

The non emergency patient transport system is considered adequate and they were very vague when I asked about reorganisation to improve the service to the patients.

The last quarter figures are

Cat A 8 82% (Required 75%)

Cat A 19 99% (Required 95%)

Cat B 19 98% (Required 95%)

So they performing above the required figures.

When asked how the systems be improved they said that better cooperation with social services could save some 999 calls.

They also attend Fire Service Training, sporting events and try to maintain a high profile within the community.

Conclusions

The problems in Northants are not as acute as in much larger Notts. as they do not have the same volume of work. They operate in much the same way and are undergoing massive changes and improvements.

19 March 2007	Set review objectives
14 May 2007	Collect evidence from the Healthcare Commission East Midlands Ambulance Service
June 2007	Collect evidence – Visits – Control Centres
16 July 2007	Collect evidence from other sources identified on 14 May 2007 – Strategic Health Authority (NHS East Midlands) Lead Commissioners (Derbyshire County PCT) Consider further evidence from the East Midlands Ambulance Service - Latest Performance Changes to the delivery of Ambulance services Challenges facing the Trust Feedback from Visits - identify possible improvements and issues to explore
10 September 2007	Other partners working with EMAS such as Acute Trusts, Police, Fire & Rescue, Emergency Planning Teams Consider further evidence from the East Midlands Ambulance Service – Suggestions for areas for Partnership Working Feedback from any further Visits - identify possible improvements and issues to explore
29 October 2007	Consider any further/outstanding Areas for Partnership Working from 10 September 2007 meeting. Feedback from any further Visits - identify possible improvements and issues to explore Draft Recommendations
19 November 2007	Agree final Recommendations