

Background

The East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST) has put in place a number of initiatives to improve its service to patients and the public should start seeing these bear tangible benefits over the next few months. This is part of a wider strategy to deliver a more tailored service to patients whilst meeting the challenges EEAST faces – an ever increasing number of 999 calls, the ongoing drive to improve the quality of our services and the need to save over £50 million in a five year period.

As a result, EEAST is implementing a new integrated service model to deliver this strategy. At the heart of this is a more in depth telephone assessment for those patients with less serious conditions to get them the help they really need (which could be advice over the phone or referral to a more appropriate health service such as their GP or minor injuries unit) rather than sending an ambulance.

This is being carried out by Clinical Support Desks who are now saving over 900 ambulance journeys a weeks. This is better for the patients as they get the help they need without needing to go to hospital, better for the NHS and hospitals and it frees up ambulances to respond to patients who really need an emergency response.

However, this alone will not meet all the challenges. Therefore EEAST is redesigning front line rotas to make sure its resources are in the right place at the right time to help patients and the revisions are based on a sophisticated demand analysis. This also means that by working more efficiently and effectively for patients EEAST can protect front line staffing and make no front line staff redundant.

EEAST is currently discussing these changes with staff and asking them to get involved locally in the design of their rotas. Staff have the local knowledge to enhance these rotas further and it also gives them the opportunity to see how we get more flexibility into our rotas for staff whilst better matching resources to demand.

It is true that in some areas, during quiet periods, there may be less vehicles on the road because they aren't needed. It simply means more will be available when and where patients need them most – making much more effective use of available resources.

The vehicle fleet will be changing to reflect the increasing number of patients who are treated on scene thanks to clinical advances and better training and the fact that the majority of patients do not need to go to hospital. This means there will be more Rapid Response Vehicles (RRV) compared to Double Staffed Ambulances. RRVs are also 25% faster when compared to Ambulances in getting to patients to start life saving treatment.

Rota redesign is not about taking resources out – EEAST is making no front line staff redundant nor closing any stations. Indeed EEAST is recruiting over 110 new Emergency Care Assistants to the front line by the end of October. As part of this process EEAST has also protected rural resources to compensate for longer journey times and a large geography.

Uttlesford

There are three ambulance stations in the Uttlesford area – Dunmow, Saffron Walden and Stansted. There are no planned changes to cover provided out of Dunmow ambulance station. The only planned change at Saffron Walden is a small reduction in the hours of

operation of the existing Rapid Response Vehicle (RRV) in that between it will operate until 1am and then start again at 7am – in the early hours of the day there is simply not the patient demand to warrant having the RRV available.

Stansted ambulance station will no longer have any vehicles starting or finishing from it but it will continue to be used as a deployment/stand by point. Bishops Stortford ambulance station is located nearby and staff from Stansted will be redeployed to other local stations as part of our drive to have the right resources on, at the right time and in the right place to meet patient demand.

In addition, we are currently building a new ambulance station at Great Notley (near Braintree) which will be the base for our second new Hazardous Area Response Team which is made up of specially trained ambulance staff who provide the ambulance response to major and hazardous incidents. This new facility in Braintree will enable us to provide an even better and more specialist health care to the local community and across the region

Table of changes being planned

Location	Existing resources planned	Future resources
Dunmow	1 x 24/7 double staffed ambulance (DSA)	1 x 24/7 DSA
Saffron Walden	1 x 24/7 DSA 1 x 24/7 Rapid Response Vehicle (RRV)	1 x 24/7 DSA 1 x 18/7 RRV
Stansted	1 x 24/7 DSA 1 x 12/7 RRV	N/A

Finally, it should be noted that EEAST now has more front line staff moving from 948 paramedics in 2007 to 1,492 now and 16 ECAs in 2007 to 215 now on top of the 140 new ECAs and around 20 paramedics that EEAST is currently in the process of recruiting.