

Briefing for Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee**19 November 2013**

Title of briefing Update report on non-emergency patient transport – new service provider	Contact details for author Address Email: Margaret.allen@dorsetccg.nhs.uk Tel: 01202 541913
<p>1. Background</p> <p>1.1 South West Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT) was the main provider of emergency and non-emergency patient transport services (NEPTS), throughout a number of iterations of health services since the 1960s. Additional NEPTS services were provided by various private ambulance and taxi firms, contracted to the acute, community and Mental Health Trusts, to ensure full provision that was required for the current operating hours of Trusts, which the SWASFT contract did not cover.</p> <p>1.2 A decision was made to tender for non-emergency patient transport services in June 2012, in order to comply with OJEU regulations for such services. This provided an opportunity to re-design NEPTS to meet current and future needs of the Trusts, as they move towards greater flexibility in operating times of clinic services etc.</p> <p>1.3 The new NEPTS contract was awarded in June 2013 with mobilisation of the contract from 1st October 2013</p> <p>2. Service to date</p> <p>2.1 On 1st October 2013, E-zec Medical was awarded the new NEPTS contract, to cover the whole county of Dorset and a proportion of out-of-county journeys where patients required hospital-to-hospital transfers, or attend Yeovil or Salisbury hospitals for treatment which do not require emergency transport.</p> <p>2.2 Whilst significant planning for the “Go Live” date was undertaken, by E-zec Medical, the health trusts, and Dorset CCG, there were some initial difficulties relating to data transfer from Trusts and SWASFT which impacted on the start of the mobilisation of the contract.</p> <p>2.3 Problems of accurate and timely patient data transfer were experienced, which contributed to delays in some pick up times and patient journeys.</p> <p>2.4 E-zec Medical’s call centre experienced unprecedented levels of calls over the first 10 days of the service operating, far exceeding 1600 on the first day, against a predicted rate of approximately 700 per day. As such E-zec Medical’s call handling system was placed under immense pressure which was exacerbated by slow deployment of IT devices for transport crews.</p> <p>2.5 E-zec Medical was unable to get immediate control of the situation, and as a result Dorset CCG placed 3 managers in the E-zec Medical call centre to oversee NEPTS requirements and to provide senior decision-making support until E-zec Medical</p>	

achieved full control of the system.

2.6 It is now apparent that the successful media campaign, launched just prior to the new contract going live, contributed to the excessive volume of contacts, which continued to be made by the Public to the service over the first 3 weeks.

2.7 The combination of the above factors resulted in a small proportion of patients not receiving transport at appropriate times or locations in the initial weeks of the service, which in turn led to some complaints and incidents being reported to all organisations and the media locally.

2.8 E-zec Medical has worked tirelessly to improve the patient experience of NEPTS and to ensure that crews are fully trained within the telephony and IT systems, which are intended to support a smooth and reliable delivery of the service across the county.

2.9 Recent data shows a significant improvement both to the general delivery of the service and against the performance data set for the service prior to the new contract being awarded.

2.10 There has been some reporting of “unfortunate incidents” in the local press, but which sadly, has not reflected the recent improvement in the general service delivery and the increasing assurance from health Trusts in the new provider organisation, nor the improving patient experience within the new operating model. There is, of course still some way to go with fully embedding the delivery and increased performance of the new service, which has currently been in place for 1 month. However, Dorset CCG remains vigilant to ensuring that the service and patient experience will continue to further improve for residents across the county. The CCG continues to meet regularly with E-zec Medical and health Trusts to oversee governance and performance arrangements.