



Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee Non Emergency Transport Report

Monday 10 March 2014

Introduction

Following the changes to non-emergency transport provision in Dorset, South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT) has been asked to provide a short report to the Committee outlining the impact of these changes on the ambulance service in Dorset.

Since South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust does not provide the non-emergency transport services for Dorset, it no longer has a mechanism for formally recording calls or issues that are specifically related to transport services. The information provided in this short report is therefore anecdotal only, but has been gathered in the form of feedback from senior service managers across the Trust.

Impacts of changes to non-emergency transport provision

Inter-Hospital Transfers

South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust is contracted to respond to requests from hospitals only when there is a need to transfer a patient to a higher level of care. SWASFT has seen an increased number of requests for hospital transfers that are not to a higher level of care and therefore should be performed by E-zec. Feedback from the hospital is often that they have not been able to secure these transfers with E-Zec or, if they have, their experience so far of the service has been negative.

SWASFT met with E-Zec and Dorset CCG on Tuesday 11 February 2014 to try and resolve the issue which has prevented Dorset CCG agreeing to our inter-hospital transfer standard operating procedure (SOP). Prior to the changes to non-emergency transport provision, each Dorset hospital commissioned private providers themselves to undertake work outside of the PTS/A&E contacts. Unlike other areas, Dorset CCG took the decision to transfer the funding for inter-hospital transfers to E-zec to either conduct the transfers themselves, or sub-contract out to the private providers. The feedback has been that this has resulted in far less responsive services. For example, Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust used to have an arrangement for 15 minute



pick-ups of cardiac patients. E-zec is not commissioned on this basis and simply provides a service within their performance targets.

SWSFT is experiencing issues with transfers to a lower or same level of care that require a Paramedic, as we are not contracted to provide this. E-zec holds this contract but only provide a Paramedic until 19:00hrs. After this time, they are unable to conduct the transfers unless they can find a private provider at short notice, which often is not possible. SWASFT is then left in the difficult situation of having a patient with no other option of transferring and we have on occasions had to agree to do these. Following the meeting with E-zec and Dorset CCG, it has been agreed that SWASFT will work with the E-zec service manager to log each incident where this occurs, so that the frequency of the issues can be properly quantified to enable the CCG to sort a solution.

Support during a Major Incident

Historically, during a Major Incident, SWASFT control and command would have been able to call upon its Patient Transport Service to provide additional support and back up to the emergency ambulance service. This support and back up might have included the use of additional vehicles to respond to less urgent calls or the provision of passenger vehicles to assist with evacuation of patients or those members of the public at risk.

During the Major Incident called on Friday 14 February 2014 in Dorset due to the severe weather and floods, this support was not available. The Major Incident Silver Cell requested that Dorset CCG contact E-zec to request assistance (as per contract). E-zec could not be contacted out-of-hours and were not available until 9am on Monday morning.

Impact on South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust

Following the loss of non-emergency transport provision in Dorset, South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust has had to absorb the cost of disposing of vehicles and equipment that are no longer required. Whilst this does not have a direct impact on patients and, although every effort has been made to minimize the financial costs, this impact on SWASFT is not accounted for in the cost of the contract, but remains a cost to the wider NHS.