

## **Briefing:**

Local Healthwatch feedback regarding the  
East of England Ambulance Service 2015/16





# Introduction

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**The Care Quality Commission (CQC) monitors, inspects and regulates services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety. It has a legal duty to listen to the things Local Healthwatch say about services. It means Local Healthwatch are best placed to inform the work of the CQC with the experiences of local people.**

From the 5th April 2016, the CQC will be inspecting the East of England Ambulance NHS Trust for the first time. As lead Local Healthwatch for this particular service, Healthwatch Suffolk was keen to ensure that a good body of evidence could be presented to the CQC on patient and carer experience.

## **The #My999Story campaign**

A plan was developed to implement a short campaign that would engage people for their experiences. The concept was based on encouraging people to share their “999 story”, making use of the Healthwatch voice icon visual elements. A short communications plan was created that included:

- Supporting campaign graphics.
- Suggested Tweets.
- Suggested website content that could also be adapted for media releases.
- MailChimp graphics and suggested content.

The plan and associated materials was offered to Local Healthwatch across the East of England in the hope that a coordinated approach might yield more feedback from patients, carers and the public. A request was also made to share all intelligence held about the Trust for inclusion in this report.

The campaign proved useful in raising the profile of Local Healthwatch with some notable impacts as follows:

- Healthwatch Suffolk and other Local Healthwatch promoted the campaign on Twitter and the associated Tweets have been viewed over 24,000 times with over 450 Tweet engagements.
- Other Local Healthwatch supported the Twitter activity including Healthwatch

Norfolk, Healthwatch Essex, Healthwatch Peterborough, Healthwatch Luton and Healthwatch Cambridgeshire but it is not known how many people their combined efforts reached.

- The campaign received good coverage in the media, which prompted a number of telephone comments and submissions to the Healthwatch Suffolk Feedback Centre.
- A number of partners in Suffolk supported and promoted the campaign including Suffolk Family Carers, Suffolk libraries, Community Action Suffolk and Public Health Suffolk.
- Community newsletter editors in Suffolk circulated a brief article to over 5,000 homes in the county.

This briefing aims to bring all of the feedback collated from Local Healthwatch together so that it can be shared with the CQC in advance of its inspection. It will also be shared with the Trust, commissioners and made available to the public via Local Healthwatch websites.

## **Please note:**

This document reports on all feedback submitted to Healthwatch Suffolk and is intended to document the feedback submitted and the themes therein.

The quantities of feedback reported in this document are not sufficient to claim that the opinions expressed are representative of the entire population of East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust patients. It should be considered however that the feedback provided to the Healthwatch network is nonetheless significant and is likely to be a fair reflection of most patients.

# In summary..

**This report is not a full assessment of the performance of the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust. It is simply intended as a statement of patient experience data recorded by Local Healthwatch in the East of England. It does not include patient experience data recorded by the Trust or any other bodies with the exception of the NHS Choices feedback platform.**

The #My999Story campaign has been successful in encouraging people to share their experiences with Local Healthwatch in the East of England. In total, over 120 stories were obtained from people across the region and three research projects have been completed by Local Healthwatch (during the year 2014/15). Within the research projects, over 750 comments were made in response to Local Healthwatch surveys.

## What did people share?

In general, people have been positive about their overall experience of the service with the exception of a few particularly negative stories recorded within the various sections of this briefing.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there is little choice but to use the service in emergency situations, Friends and Family Test responses extracted from the Healthwatch Suffolk feedback Centre indicate that a majority of people would recommend the service to their friends or family.

High levels of positivity are very clearly evident within the feedback. Indeed, Healthwatch Suffolk Feedback Centre and NHS Choices data (up to 3rd March 2016) combined reveals a total of 59 five star reviews out of a possible 79. The current overall rating on the Healthwatch Suffolk feedback Centre is four stars.

In particular, analysis of the feedback obtained confirms an established understanding that people tend to be strongly positive about ambulance crews. People often described them as professional, reassuring and kind.

## Examples include:

"The staff are always quick to arrive and very kind and helpful. Most of all they always treat him with sympathy and respect. And are most reassuring." - **Healthwatch Suffolk**

"Called out the ambulance on behalf of

an elderly neighbour. She was treated professionally but with great humanity and understanding". - **Healthwatch Norfolk**

"The Emergency Ambulance teams/ Paramedics were amazing on the 3 occasions I called them out for my Dad who was terminally ill. Their empathy, kindness, calmness and control of each situation made me feel confident in their abilities and in my care." - **Healthwatch Peterborough**

"Helpful and friendly putting me at ease always chatting to me" - **Healthwatch Cambridgeshire**

The perceived professionalism of ambulance crews is also reflected within the research reports produced by Healthwatch Suffolk and Healthwatch Norfolk in 2014/15. Within the reports, 421 (88%) out of 479 comments regarding treatment by staff were positive in sentiment. The report completed by Healthwatch Norfolk particularly identifies that people's comments on their treatment by ambulance crews were strongly complementary with many uses of the words 'professional', 'caring', 'kind' and 'compassionate' as echoed in the feedback recorded from Local Healthwatch across the region.

A few stories indicated that paramedics had made a particular effort to support patient and carer wellbeing under difficult circumstances.

## Examples include:

"Paramedics made sure a sick child could see Santa before going to A&E. Both Santa and the paramedics were fab in making sure little man was safe but still saw Santa. They regularly need paramedic care and cannot fault any care received from the paramedics" - **Healthwatch Cambridgeshire**

"...was particularly impressed that one of the ambulance crew took the time to look out for my welfare too. They called me from the hospital to update me on my husband's condition and progress to being admitted (it was slow because of the doctors strike). They advised me to take care and not rush in as my husband was stable and awaiting transfer to the hospital wards." - **Healthwatch Suffolk**

Negativity within feedback is mostly attributed

to waiting for an ambulance to arrive, sometimes compounded by issues with communication and call handling.

According to research conducted by Healthwatch Norfolk, 30 minutes was the absolute maximum amount of time people would be willing to wait for an ambulance to arrive. With most people opting for 10 or 15 minutes waiting.. This may go some way to explaining why there is sometimes a real disparity between the expectations of the patient or their family and how the service actually operates.

People have reported various lengths of time waiting for an ambulance to arrive; from five minutes to three hours and, in one unusual instance, seven hours.

**Examples include:**

“...after 10 days mother was so ill doctor eventually came and called an ambulance however the call was not classed as an emergency and took seven hours to arrive. The callers mother passed away shortly after arrival in hospital.” - **Healthwatch Essex**

“...the person expressed that they could do nothing except provide physical support to their son who was in shock and in pain. The person accepts that their son's injury was not life threatening but was completely reliant on awaiting medical intervention just two miles away. They feel that two hours of waiting was simply too long given their sons level of discomfort.” - **Healthwatch Suffolk**

Some people reported a negative impact on the subsequent outcome for the patient.

**Examples include:**

“...They have experienced waits of up to half an hour or more before the ambulance arrives and they feel that their daughter has nearly died on at least two occasions and one incident left her in critical care for three days. Their daughter has had a paramedic car, which then needed to call for an ambulance and once, because there was going to be a long delay, the paramedic considered calling the air ambulance...” - **Healthwatch Suffolk**

“In their opinion, delays in dispatching an appropriate ambulance may have contributed to their relative's death.” - **Healthwatch Suffolk**

“Commentator stated that the recovery from a stroke had been affected by a lack of speed and observation by the Ambulance service (and others). Family strongly suspected

stroke at time due to indistinct speech and loss of movement on left side. Although the original response to the call was good, there was a long wait for an ambulance to take the patient to hospital (2 hours).” - **Healthwatch Cambridgeshire**

“Patient became very unwell and a doctor attended sometime after an initial request for a call out had been made to their GP practice. An ambulance was called however it was not classed as an emergency and took seven hours to arrive. The patient later passed away shortly after arriving at the hospital.” - **Healthwatch Cambridgeshire**

Feeling that they had waited too long, a few individuals opted to cancel the ambulance in favour of a family member transporting them to hospital or to a GP practice instead.

**Examples include:**

“...An ambulance is called. After 45 minutes, the ambulance has not arrived and so the patient asks to be taken home. A by-stander cancels the ambulance and the patient visits his GP who sends them immediately to Ipswich A&E, where he is subsequently admitted and receiving further medical tests for a slow heartbeat.” - **Healthwatch Suffolk**

“...continually told that a ‘clinical technician’ would ring back within 2 hours’. Not prepared for this I took my friend to A&E at West Suffolk (BSE), where we were treated in an excellent fashion. It transpires that my friend has sepsis (potentially a life threatening condition), was admitted and remains in hospital...” - **NHS Choices**

“...my husband was found to be suffering from septic shock & we called 999 requesting an emergency ambulance. The call taker took the details & then explained our call would be triaged & we would be called back within the hour. We explained that a matron had requested an ambulance however we were told that medical information can only be supplied by a patient's GP & we would therefore be triaged within the hour. Within 15mins of that call, my husband deteriorated & so we called 999 again to request an ambulance. Again we were told we would be called back within the hour. This was unacceptable & we began the process of getting my husband into a car to drive him the 30mins to the nearest hospital...” - **Healthwatch Suffolk**

“Patient had a TIA at midnight and called for

an ambulance. She was advised that there would be a 45 minute wait because of the rural location of their home. Her husband was able to come home and drive her to the hospital..." - **Healthwatch Norfolk**

It is important to acknowledge that there are also a significant number of positive stories relating to a prompt response from the service.

Examples include:

"We have always had help within ten to fifteen minutes. Either by paramedic rapid response or an ambulance. I cannot praise them highly enough." - **Healthwatch Suffolk**

"...More recently I had to call for an ambulance for one of my elderly customers as he had a bad fall they arrived quickly dealt with him brilliantly & took him to A&E..." - **Healthwatch Cambridgeshire**

"...called 999 when my child had an epileptic fit. We live in a rural area but they arrived within 5 mins and the lady remained on the telephone until the paramedic arrived." - **Healthwatch Suffolk**

Issues with waiting for an ambulance to arrive are sometimes compounded by problems with communication that increase frustration for patients.

Examples include:

"The information from the doctor's call was not passed from call handler to dispatch, resulting in the call being downgraded." - **Healthwatch Suffolk**

"...our experience with the call handler/s was incredibly frustrating as they were unable to accept medical information given

by a healthcare professional on scene." - **Healthwatch Suffolk**

An operator told her an ambulance would be with me as soon as possible.... When the paramedic arrived my manager explained that we had been waiting for an ambulance to arrive for an hour. The paramedic informed us that there was no record of the two previous calls made to the service - **Healthwatch Suffolk**

In summary, it seems patient experience of the Trust is, for the most part, positive, particularly about staff. The conflict between service performance and patient/relative expectations remains an issue.

Issues with communication indicate that more could be done to keep those waiting for an ambulance updated on when their designated ambulance or first responder is likely to arrive. This may help people to feel reassured and to understand why an ambulance may not be immediately available.

This briefing has been shared with the Care Quality Commission to inform its inspection of the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust due to take place in April 2016. The report has also been made available to Local Healthwatch in the East of England and can be downloaded from the Healthwatch Suffolk website.

The CQC has received copies of the full research reports compiled by Healthwatch Suffolk and Healthwatch Norfolk. An Excel database of all individual comments collated as a part of this campaign has also been shared. It is hoped that the CQC will make use of the data to inform its overall understanding of the experiences people have when accessing services provided by this Trust.

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"The Care Quality Commission is committed to including service user's views when we inspect health and social care services. Healthwatch has been instrumental in ensuring we understand patients' use of and opinion of East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST). The nature of ambulance services makes obtaining the views of patients more difficult whilst on inspection. This valuable and important information will be given to the inspection team (inspectors and specialist advisors) to inform inspection planning and for focussing on any areas of concern as well as areas of good performance and will be used to give the patients' perspective in the final report of EEAST". - **Mark Heath (Care Quality Commission Inspection Manager East Anglia team)**

# healthwatch Suffolk



We want to hear about your experiences of NHS and social care services in Suffolk including hospitals, care homes, GP practices and other services.

Please share your views with us (good or bad). We will use your feedback to make a difference and improve services in the county.

**Your spotlight  
on local services**



Visit [www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk) to anonymously rate and review your local services now. You can also feedback by calling **01449 703949**.

# The data...

## Healthwatch Suffolk

Between 1st May 2015 and 16 March 2016, Healthwatch Suffolk received a total of 62 comments about ambulance services. It has also conducted two pieces of research as follows:

- Public experiences and perceptions of the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust: This report was published in August 2014 and summarised the findings of engagement work completed in partnership with the Trust.
- Non-Emergency Patient Transport - Public Perceptions in Suffolk: This report was published in August 2015 and examines the difficulty people face when trying to access transport to get to healthcare appointments.

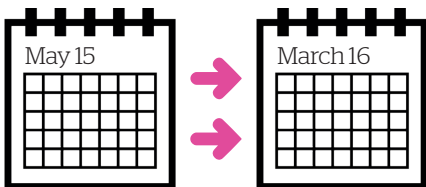
A summary of both research projects is available to read from page 17.

## The Healthwatch Suffolk Feedback Centre

Healthwatch Suffolk has an online engagement tool to help people in Suffolk share what's good and what's bad about health and social care in the county.

The Feedback Centre is accessible on [www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk) via a variety of devices including mobile phones, ordinary PCs and tablets. This means that people can easily and anonymously rate the care that they or a friend or family member has received in an engaging and simple way from wherever they are.

48 reviews have been recorded directly onto the Feedback Centre. The feedback was recorded:



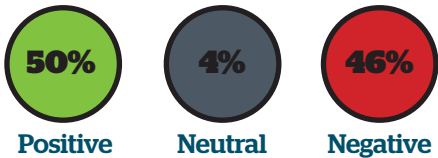
## Ratings

Reviewers are asked to rate various aspects of their care and treatment. Reviews are out of a total of five stars. In the above period, people have

rated the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust as follows:



48 people have also rated the trust against a number of other categories and these include:



Sentiment scores include data from NHS Choices

### Friends and Family Test Question Responses

26 individuals chose to answer the FFT question on the Healthwatch Suffolk Feedback Centre. The results recorded are as follows:



### Top three themes



| Sub-theme     | Number | Positive | Neutral | Negative |
|---------------|--------|----------|---------|----------|
| Waiting times | 19     | 68%      | 6%      | 26%      |



| Sub-theme | Number | Positive | Neutral | Negative |
|-----------|--------|----------|---------|----------|
| Attitude  | 10     | 90%      | 0%      | 10%      |
| General   | 4      | 100%     | 0%      | 0%       |



| Sub-theme         | Number | Positive | Neutral | Negative |
|-------------------|--------|----------|---------|----------|
| Experience        | 8      | 88%      | 2%      | 10%      |
| Carer involvement | 1      | 100%     | 0%      | 50%      |

## Comments submitted to the Healthwatch Suffolk Feedback Centre

The following feedback has been submitted to the Healthwatch Suffolk Feedback Centre either by direct input via the website or from hard copy comment cards that are collated by the Healthwatch Suffolk Community Development Team or sent to Healthwatch Suffolk by Freepost.

All feedback has been moderated by Healthwatch Suffolk in accordance with its Feedback Centre Operational Policy and website Terms and Conditions.

| Rating | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ★★★★★  | Had two episodes of Atrial Fibrillation - first I was admitted to hospital - it was such a relief when the ambulance arrived and the care was so good - kind yet efficient. The second time was less serious and I had taken medication but was concerned it hadn't worked. The crew came out assessed me for half-an-hour and told me it had worked fine. I felt guilty I had called them out unnecessarily but they would have none of it and told me I had done the right thing. They were friendly, helpful, reassuring and very kind. Fabulous both times.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| ★★★★★  | Seated outside the AHT coffee shop at Kentford, I turned my head to see if the waitress was coming and 20 seconds later I felt my body shutting down. My daughter asked the shop to dial 999 and the manageress as a first-aider took control. The ambulance arrived within less than ten minutes and the paramedics' care and attention could not be faulted - they managed to take the stress and the emotion out of the situation for my wife and daughter which helped me relax.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| ★★★★★  | I dialled 999 on February 10th for my husband who had collapsed. The ambulance arrived very quickly and the two guys that came were professional, kind and reassuring. They dealt with the situation and took my husband off to hospital. I have nothing but good things to say about the service and would like to pass on my huge thanks. I was also most impressed with the lady who answered my sons call and stayed on the line to talk him through what he should be doing to help his father and keep him breathing. We had an excellent response. I was particularly impressed that one of the ambulance crew took the time to look out for my welfare too. They called me from the hospital to update me on my husbands condition and progress to being admitted (it was slow because of the doctors strike). They advised me to take care and not rush in as my husband was stable and awaiting transfer to the hospital wards. |
| ★★★★★  | My husband has had to use the service about 5 times. The staff are always quick to arrive and very kind and helpful. Most of all they always treat him with sympathy and respect. And are most reassuring.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| ★★★★★  | Having called an ambulance about ten times between my wife and myself, we have always had help within ten to fifteen minutes. Either by paramedic rapid response or an ambulance. I cannot praise them highly enough.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| ★★★★★  | Helpful and friendly putting me at ease always chatting to me                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| ★★★★★  | Our Mum fell at home early one morning. We called the ambulance service who arrived within 15 minutes. She received outstanding care from 2 paramedics. But what stood out the most was how quickly they assessed her in terms of her dementia and gave care which met her needs including how brilliantly they communicated with her.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| ★★★★★  | An ambulance was called after a phone call to the 111 service in relation to suffering severe abdominal pain for some hours. Within 5 minutes a Paramedic car arrived and he then called for an ambulance to take me to hospital which arrived promptly. All three of the staff were professional, caring and reassuring at a time when I felt very unwell and vulnerable. I can't thank them or praise them enough.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| ★★★★★  | Ambulance arrived promptly and I was given a thorough check over and treated with respect and kindness. Arrangements to see a doctor later were made but I was not left until my symptoms settled.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ☆☆☆☆☆ | My terminally ill father was brought home for palliative care by an ambulance team. It was the coldest day of the year; he was bumped across his gravel drive with no coverings, taken into his bungalow and put on his bed. The green "handover" carrier bag was left on his bed and when the 24/7 carer asked about handover the reply was "We don't get involved in that love" and both members left. I was very visibly upset and shocked about my Dad's treatment. I can only hope that this ambulance team were not part of the Emergency team as I would have not had any confidence whatsoever in their abilities to make a patient and their family feel as though they were in charge of the situation or that they even cared. I just hope that they never experience this type of behaviour for any member of their family who may be in the same position one day. My Dad cried with relief that the journey and the experience was over. He died in January.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| ☆☆☆☆☆ | <p>December 26th. My disabled wife collapsed into the footwell of our car when I got her home after haemodialysis at 17. I tried to pull her out but couldn't. About 17:30 I dialled 999. The ambulance came at 19:45. It was the crew's first job when they came on duty at 19:00. They found a funny trace on their ECG machine and took her to hospital.</p> <p>She was discharged on New Year's Eve after no physio, just a check that she could stand with a zimmer frame for 1 minute, and instructions not to use our motability vehicle for hospital visits, but use patient Transport instead at all times. Ambulance people and A&amp;E people great, the rest, no comment.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| ★★★★★ | Following a fall at home resulting in a cut to the head which was bleeding profusely I phoned 999. A paramedic arrived in a car in a very short space of time but was unable to deal with the problem so radioed for an ambulance. Here again this arrived very quickly and 2 more paramedics came into the house, helped me into the ambulance and tried to treat me there. They were very thorough and did lots of checks but unfortunately were unable to stem the bleeding so stitches were required. I was in Ipswich A & E within an hour of the original phone call which was absolutely brilliant. I cannot speak highly enough of the manner in which I was treated by all 3 of them.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| ★★★★★ | I thought my daughter was having a heart attack after the fall. They confirmed it was an epileptic fit and was after treatment taken to hospital.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| ☆☆☆☆☆ | Having been assessed by a Community Matron, my husband was found to be suffering from septic shock & we called 999 requesting an emergency ambulance. The call taker took the details & then explained our call would be triaged & we would be called back within the hour. We explained that a matron had requested an ambulance however we were told that medical information can only be supplied by a patient's GP & we would therefore be triaged within the hour. Within 15mins of that call, my husband deteriorated & so we called 999 again to request an ambulance. Again we were told we would be called back within the hour. This was unacceptable & we began the process of getting my husband into a car to drive him the 30mins to the nearest hospital. He became quite unwell during this transfer & within that time, we were called back by the ambulance service to say an ambulance had been dispatched - it arrived approx 20 mins later. The ambulance crew were great & we have nothing but praise for the crew, or the A&E staff - my husband underwent surgery & is now recovering well. However our experience with the call handler/s was incredibly frustrating as they were unable to accept medical information given by a healthcare professional on scene. |
| ★★★★★ | The Emergency Ambulance teams/Paramedics were amazing on the 3 occasions I called them out for my Dad who was terminally ill. Their empathy, kindness, calmness and control of each situation made me feel confident in their abilities and in my care.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ☆☆☆☆☆ | <p>I was taken ill with severe abdominal pains, I was doubled up in pain so a member of staff called 999. An operator told her an ambulance would be with me as soon as possible. So she hung up and waited. I got worse so she called again, again was told an ambulance was on its way, so waited again. I eventually collapsed in agony and became unresponsive so she phoned again. This time a paramedic arrived by this time I was conscious. When the paramedic arrived my manager explained that we had been waiting for an ambulance or paramedic to arrive for an hour. The paramedic informed us that this 1st call had been sent as a 999 call and had no record of the two previous calls.</p> <p>I can not fault the paramedic he was really understanding and efficient. I was eventually taken to Ipswich A &amp; E by a St John's Ambulance again the staff were amazing and caring.</p> |
| ★★★★★ | The ambulance arrived very quickly considering I live in a very rural location. The operator stayed on the line until the ambulance arrived checking on the patient's condition and offering reassurance which was very comforting. The two paramedics were considerate, caring and knowledgeable, they quickly assessed the situation, obtained the information required and took my daughter to hospital.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| ★★★★★ | Paramedic attended at home in Carlton Colville & was brilliant.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| ★★★★★ | Following concern about a potential mini stroke, my Mum was visited at home both by a paramedic and by an ambulance. After all checks were carried out she was referred to Addenbrookes hospital to ensure that there was no risk of a further collapse.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| ★★★★★ | I was suffering a burst ulcer when they turned up within a reasonable time, ensured I was stable and as comfortable as possible and they relayed EXACTLY the information I had given them to the hospital staff. Brilliant.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| ★★★★★ | In times of extreme distress the ambulance men and woman are caring and reassuring and very good at their job.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| ★★★★★ | I was concussed, had 6 broken ribs, collarbone, cracked sternum, punctured lung. Pain relief was given quickly and despite being soaked to skin and very cold was reassured by capable and confident handling. I was aware assistant was a trainee and therefore not able to do a great deal but he drove ambulance and thus freed the senior to take care of me. I can't speak highly enough of his care.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| ★★★★★ | I called 999 when my child had an epileptic fit. We live in a rural area but they arrived within 5 mins and the lady remained on the telephone until the paramedic arrived.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| ★★★★★ | Called 999 with a suspected stroke the fast response vehicle arrived very quickly, he quickly gave medication and monitored his heart etc. Very quickly the ambulance arrived. They loaded my husband straight on to the ambulance and left under blue lights. We were very pleased we trusted our instincts and called 999, they were excellent.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| ★★★★★ | I called an ambulance at about 4.30 am because my wife was very ill. A paramedic was with us inside 15 minutes followed very quickly by an ambulance. They all knew their stuff and had all the gear needed. They got to West Suffolk Hospital very quickly and the interchange with A&E staff was superb.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| ★★★★★ | Suffering panic attacks I have needed the service and the treatment I've received has been fantastic. Compassionate staff. Taking the time you need. Can't fault them :)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| ☆☆☆☆☆ | My dad was unwell, sitting on the floor. I was talking to him when the paramedic arrived. He told me, 'He can't hear you, you know'. My mother put a blanket over my dad and the paramedic told her that she didn't need it. The paramedic was rude and did not make my mother and I feel reassured for my father.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| ☆☆☆☆☆ | Accident @ small roundabout just off slip road (A12) for Ipswich. Went 1/4 mile to Fox's marina to get help. 2 very helpful men from parking. 1 phoned ambulance service and asked for ambulance saying my wife had a suspected fracture. 2 further calls were made because of the long delay & we were told the ambulance was on its way. It arrived 3/4 hours later. The ambulance crew were apologetic and professional. The central control is at fault.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

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|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ★★★★★ | Living near Leiston I needed an ambulance urgently and they reached us very quickly and looked after me very well on the way to hospital.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| ★★★★★ | Extremely patient paramedic and 1st year student. Reassuring, compassionate, caring. Excellent care received, extremely grateful.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| ☆☆☆☆☆ | The usual number for hospital transport no longer works. I was given the new number but when I rang there were a number of automated options which I found very difficult to deal with. All sorts of details were required which I found difficult I am 92!!!! I didn't have to do this before.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| ★★★★★ | Excellent service. Very quick getting to my home. Treating me with compassion and thought and put me at ease. Could not have done a thing better, excellent work.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| ★★★★★ | My mum re-broke her ankle so we called 999 and the ambulance arrived in 10 minutes. Once in the ambulance they made sure the break was stable. We drove to the hospital and arrived first. When she arrived she was taken straight in and was seen by the doctors. She was taken for x-rays and they had to manipulate back into place. Then they operated and she stayed in hospital for about a week.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| ☆☆☆☆☆ | 93 year old mum had a fall, not injured but couldn't get up. Ambulance service so stretched it was 2 1/2 hours before help came. Men were brilliant when they arrived - no complaint with them but the wait was awful for my mother and my stressed father (with dementia).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| ★★★★★ | My mother had a heart attack at the end of February. She is 92 and has dementia. The ambulance crew were brilliant. The paramedic who sat in the back with us was so good at keeping Mum calm and joked with her.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| ★★★★★ | I suffered a burst ulcer and they turned up really quickly and dealt with me very professionally and with care too. I was very impressed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| ☆☆☆☆☆ | Took too long for ambulance to arrive, not very helpful, didn't talk much about problem. Sent ambulance from nearer areas talk about problem more in detail if not known send someone who can talk about the problem.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| ☆☆☆☆☆ | My mother had broken her leg and was staying with me instead of at the hospital but she had to go back for physio. I phoned when we needed transport explaining her requirements two times they didn't turn up another time they came in a car when I clearly specified she needed an ambulance and help due to her break, it was very stressful for me and especially my mum.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| ★★★★★ | My mother slid to the floor as I was getting her up in the morning, I stopped her falling and hurting herself but I was unable to get her up. The ambulance men arrived within 15 minutes of me calling 111 and were brilliant. They got my mum up and then gave her a thorough check up. First class!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| ★★★★★ | <p>On three occasion I was in contact with the ambulance service.</p> <p>1) after an operation I had an infection due to dehissed wound. I didn't have to wait too long and was looked after very well. I was given Entonox which helped a lot.</p> <p>2) my 92 year old mother had a heart attack. (She died two weeks later at the care home). She had an invisible boyfriend called Don. When she was feeling low she thought Don was never going to come and see her again. During the whole trip, the paramedic role played Don with the result that Mum smiled all the way to the hospital. I regret that I have forgotten his name.</p> <p>3) I was taken to A&amp;E with severe bowel pain and vomiting. I was recovering bowel cancer and was very scared. My husband rang for the ambulance as our experience of 111 is not very good. As he put the phone down the door bell rang. It was (name removed) in his car who just happened to be driving past! He allayed my fears and called for an ambulance. The crew were brilliant, even though I was sick twice but I was given Entonox.</p> |

|       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ★★★★★ | On 1 February, following my 999 call, a paramedic arrived within 10 minutes. He was thorough in his examination and treatment. An ambulance arrived shortly afterwards and once satisfied he could be moved, transferred him to hospital. I cannot thank them enough for the care they gave to him and the reassurance to me. |
| ★★★★★ | Very impressed with the care provided on two occasions. The paramedic with me in the car on one occasion and was great.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| ★★★★★ | Once patient is in hospital it would be better if the paramedics could hand over quickly so they are not waiting around. It took nearly 1.5 hours before they could leave my husband.                                                                                                                                         |

In addition to the feedback extracted from NHS Choices and the Healthwatch Suffolk Feedback Centre, some people chose to share feedback using other methods. (E.g. email, telephone or by letter). The stories are summarised below.

| Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Story 1</b></p> <p>In February, the patient blacked out and hit their head in Beccles. Bystanders called for an ambulance at 12 midday and some first responders, who happened to be passing by, helped to comfort the patient whilst they waited for an ambulance to arrive.</p> <p>After one hour, despite reluctance from those in attendance, a decision was taken to move the patient so that a relative could drive them to the hospital. The ambulance subsequently arrived at 2.30pm. The patients' understanding is that their case was demoted to a call back from a doctor because the crew had been informed that they were conscious. Then, when they were taken to hospital by a relative, the first responders rang to cancel the ambulance.</p> <p>The patient feels that the ambulance took too long to arrive (they could have had a severe concussion and it was not immediately clear why they had blacked out), the doctor "call back" had not been arranged and despite the cancellation of the ambulance it still turned up over one hour later.</p>                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b>Story 2</b></p> <p>Feedback was received from the relative of a patient. A doctor requested urgently for an ambulance to arrive within one hour. It was fifty two minutes before an ambulance was dispatched meaning that the doctors' request could not be fulfilled.</p> <p>The original ambulance was diverted so the patients' family contacted 999 again and a second ambulance was dispatched. The second ambulance had a technical crew with no paramedics and so the crew called for back-up. Due to a number of problems, an ambulance did not leave the persons home until three hours after the initial 999 call. The patient never regained consciousness.</p> <p>The patients relative noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In their opinion, delays in dispatching an appropriate ambulance may have contributed to their relatives death.</li> <li>• The information from the doctor's call was not passed from call handler to dispatch, resulting in the call being downgraded.</li> <li>• There was no follow up from the original 999 call to update on when the ambulance would arrive.</li> <li>• A formal complaint made to the Trust about the incident has been answered as slowly as possible.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Story 3</b></p> <p>At the end of October, relatives dialled 999 for their father-in-law who was feeling very uncomfortable. They noted that the ambulance arrived very quickly and the crew were friendly and kind. The family have nothing but praise for the ambulance service who kept their relative calm and happy.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

#### Story 4

An elderly person cut their finger badly. The person requires the assistance of a walker and couldn't put her hand on to the frame so her daughter called for an ambulance.

Because it was classed as non-emergency she waited 2 hours for someone to arrive. Her finger was bandaged and has healed wonderfully. Her daughter was given clear instructions down the telephone and feels that the call handlers couldn't have been nicer.

#### Story 5

Caller told us that he had called for an ambulance two years ago when he had septicaemia and pneumonia. He expressed that his experience could not have been improved at all and was happy with the length of wait for the ambulance to arrive. The person concerned most recently called 999 at Christmas 2015 when he had heart attack. He was happy with all aspects of the service and wanted to share how pleased he has been when he has needed to call 999.

#### Story 6

The commentators step father is in a nursing home with Dementia and shares a room with their mother who also has Dementia. The patient had a fall and staff quickly diagnosed a broken hip. An ambulance was called at approximately 11:00am but did not arrive until 14:20. In the meantime, the patient was made comfortable in bed which they expressed may have meant the ambulance service did not see this as an emergency.

The caller described the ambulance crew as "jaded" and felt there was little patient interaction or care. A crew member was heard to "moan" about the NHS in general and the ambulance service in particular. The relative felt the route taken by the ambulance to the hospital was not the quickest possible or the most comfortable for the patient.

Upon arriving at the Norfolk and Norwich hospital, there was a 20 minute wait for the discharge from the ambulance to take place. The patient then waited on a trolley for a number of hours and was operated on late Monday afternoon. Caller wanted to stress that they sympathised with the crew, who they considered seemed exhausted and overworked.

#### Story 7

The patients' wife called for an ambulance on 29th December 2015 because her husband had woken up with a severe throat and ear infection. A Paramedic arrived within 15 mins and stayed with the patient for three hours while he tried to get the patient a doctors appointment. He is 77 and diabetic.

An appointment was found at Beccles Hospital. The patient had to drive himself as there was no ambulance available. They found this concerning because he felt he was too poorly to drive. Once seen he then had to drive to an open pharmacy as most were closed at the time. The patient recalls that the paramedic was "lovely" and "kind".

#### Story 8

The patients' wife called 999 for an ambulance in March 2015. She was very impressed. The call handler talked her through everything while she waited for the paramedic and ambulance to arrive. The ambulance arrived after 10-15 minutes. Her husband was taken to Ipswich Hospital with Pneumonia and made a full recovery. The caller wanted to thank everyone involved in her husband's care.

#### Story 9

A husband and wife were out for a day in Aldeburgh. The wife goes into a shop and returns to find her husband is missing. He has fallen in a car park, where he had a seizure. An ambulance is called. After 45 minutes, the ambulance has not arrived and so the patient asks to be taken home. A by-stander cancels the ambulance and the patient visits his GP who sends them immediately to Ipswich A&E, where he is subsequently admitted and receiving further medical tests for a slow heartbeat.

#### Story 10

A person comments on behalf of their 86 year old neighbour who, upon returning to their home, finds the ambulance service has dropped a confused gentleman to their flat who is using their bathroom with no idea as to where he is. It is considered the error was caused by a common mistake with computer systems that mix up the postal addresses of two properties. The person is not making a complaint but wishes to encourage that greater care is taken over the use of automatic address finding.

It seems that, finding the door unlocked (whilst the neighbour was out), the ambulance service let the man in, made him comfortable and left. The neighbour sorted everything out and ensured the gentleman made it safely to his own home where his daughter had been waiting to settle him in.

#### Story 11

The person is sharing the experience of their 16 year old son, who had badly dislocated his knee at a local sports centre (less than 5 minutes by car from Ipswich Hospital). The person's son was completely incapacitated by this injury - unable to move or walk and so a request was made to the sports centre staff to call for an ambulance. The ambulance took 2 hours to arrive.

During the 2 hour wait, the person expressed that they could do nothing except provide physical support to their son who was in shock and in pain. The person accepts that their son's injury was not life threatening but was completely reliant on awaiting medical intervention just two miles away. They feel that two hours of waiting was simply too long given their son's discomfort.

#### Story 12

Caller stated that they cannot fault the service provided. They recently needed to call for an ambulance for their mother who is 88 years old. A first responder arrived followed by an ambulance. They stated that it was an excellent service, with patient focussed paramedics. The caller has also occasionally needed to call for an ambulance to attend supported housing schemes across Suffolk. Again, they feel the service received has been excellent.

#### Story 13

Person's mother-in-law collapsed from an infection and so an ambulance was called. The ambulance arrived very quickly, to what the person described as a "very rural" area. They expressed that the treatment was excellent, referring to it as "compassionate", "understanding" and "reassuring". The relative travelled with the patient to the hospital to keep the patient calm. The transfer was "swift" and the relative recalls having "complete faith" in the service.

#### Story 14

Person has a 41yr old daughter who has chronic emphysema. Over the year, the patients' family have needed to call 999 at least 20 times, resulting in 15 admissions to the hospital, because of the patients' difficulties with breathing and being a CO2 retainer. The family cannot fault the first responders who arrive very quickly and they feel the paramedics are brilliant with their daughter.

They feel that problems occur when an ambulance is not available in the area. They have experienced waits of up to half an hour or more before the ambulance arrives and they feel that their daughter has nearly died on at least two occasions and one incident left her in critical care for three days. Their daughter has had a paramedic car, which then needed to call for an ambulance and once, because there was going to be a long delay, the paramedic considered calling the air ambulance. The person lives in Suffolk Coastal and have had ambulances attend from Ipswich, Great Yarmouth, Beccles and other areas in Suffolk.

The person feels the manner in which response times are gathered is misleading (stopping the clock once a first responder has arrived). Whilst there is an ambulance station located relatively close to the patient, the family have been told that the ambulance is used to provide cover in Ipswich.

#### Story 15

The person normally feels EFAST normally provide an excellent service. Recently, they had reason to call for an ambulance. A member of staff was suffering with gall stone pain. The person had to call 999 three times and waited for over an hour before an ambulance arrived. The member of staff concerned collapsed and passed out on the floor because they were in so much discomfort. The patient was eventually taken to hospital and later that day discharged after being given pain relief.

#### Story 16

82 year old caller looks after 80 year old wife (in an annexe to a relatives house). The husband recently had to call 999 as his wife had a fall. He was asked lots of questions which led to his wife not being in need of an urgent ambulance but even so the ambulance arrived 20 minutes later.. The patient was lifted into a chair and received a very thorough examination. The medics were with them for about an hour.

Three weeks later his wife fell again and the ambulance was called. Again it wasn't deemed an emergency and arrived 45 minutes later. Again, the patient was made comfortable and had a thorough examination. The caller was very pleased at the care they had and thought the service was very good.

#### Story 17

Patient had an uncontrolled asthma attack. As it was the weekend, they initially called the NHS 111, which resulted in an ambulance dispatch. The patient was given a full check over and provided with advice. Arrangements were made for them to see a doctor. The patient stated that they could not have asked for a better service and the kindness showed was outstanding. The crew did not leave until they were sure the patient was okay.

#### Story 18

Person's daughter fell, passed out and started to have difficulty breathing. An ambulance was requested. The call handlers talked the person through what to do until the ambulance came. The ambulance arrived in about 10mins. They were very pleased with the help and response of ambulance service and couldn't fault it at all.

#### Story 19

Relative had to call 999 because her husband had violent tummy pains. The ambulance arrived within 15 minutes (Framlingham, Suffolk). The person said the two paramedics could not have been kinder and more efficient. They informed the couple that such pain is notoriously difficult to diagnose and very quickly transported them to the Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust. Both paramedics were "kindness itself" and very reassuring for her husband who is totally blind. Her husband had to have an emergency operation for a perforated bowel so their decision was absolutely correct.

#### Story 20

The person's wife collapsed at home so they called 999. The ambulance arrived very promptly and took the couple at high speed to the West Suffolk Hospital and subsequently to Papworth Hospital, where the person's wife underwent heart surgery which saved her life. Without the prompt and professional actions of the ambulance crews the person believes his wife would not have reached Papworth alive. They called the service "first class" in support of their community.

## Research projects

Healthwatch Suffolk has conducted two research projects of relevance to this briefing.

### Public perceptions and experiences of the East of England Ambulance Service and NHS 111 in Suffolk

In August 2014, Healthwatch Suffolk published the findings of its joint research project with the East of England Ambulance Service. The research sought to engage local people about their perceptions and experiences of the service in Suffolk.

People gave views through surveys and telephone interviews and a total of 337 people responded.

The results of the survey showed that patients tend to be positive about the treatment and service they receive from ambulance crews. A majority of the sample were satisfied with their treatment overall, indicating that they had confidence in the service and that they were treated with dignity, compassion and respect by the crew at all times.

There was some negativity expressed about waiting for ambulances, equipment failures and an apparent lack of appreciation for the experience and knowledge of carers who support patients with long term conditions. Other findings

included:

- The need for better education to help people to differentiate between NHS 111 and 999 emergency services.
- The need for NHS 111 services in Suffolk to be enhanced with regard to access, responsiveness and triage tools.

The full report can be downloaded from: <http://www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/our-reports-2/>

### **Non-Emergency Patient Transport - Public perceptions in Suffolk**

In August 2015, Healthwatch Suffolk published a report that examines the difficulty people face when trying to access transport to get to healthcare appointments. It draws together feedback from patients and community transport operators to highlight impact across the system and where problems exist. The report also highlights the consequences that shortcomings in transport have on local people.

- Over 1 in 4 people with a disability missed a hospital or GP appointment due to a lack of transport.
- 1 in 3 respondents with disabilities had an appointment changed at short notice which meant that they could not access transport to a rearranged appointment.
- Only 6% of respondents knew how they may get their transport costs reimbursed.

Many people rely on making their own way to hospital or on the good will of a friend or family member. Those without access to a car often rely on public transport, which can mean facing a lengthy and complex journey because bus routes are not always direct to hospitals. With an aging population and increasing immobility, this must be a concern for the future wellbeing of people in Suffolk.

Problems with transport are compounded by conditions that limit the options available to people. For example, one of the most common costs people living with cancer face is getting to and from their appointments, which can often total eight visits per month. Moreover, susceptibility to infection means that public transport is often unsuitable, forcing people to rely on travel by car or taxi. If the eligibility criteria for accessing patient transport services was extended, this would reduce the high financial impact on such individuals.

The report demonstrates that the criteria for eligibility to access Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services (run by the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust) is inconsistently applied in Suffolk. Several of the people spoken to had severe mobility issues but were refused transport. A case was highlighted of an 86 year old lady with a broken ankle who was initially declined transport and told to get the bus. Furthermore, several respondents that had diminishing health who were once eligible are now ineligible.

Healthwatch Suffolk considered that an unknown number of missed GP and hospital appointments come as a result of individuals not being able to access affordable transport. The findings indicate most people are unaware that they may be able to claim a refund of the cost of travelling to NHS services. It is important therefore that steps are taken to raise public awareness of the Healthcare Travel Cost Scheme.

We know that poor access to health services due to a lack of public transport or high transport costs is a significant barrier to accessing local services and amenities. It can have a major impact on the most vulnerable people in our communities and is a factor in rural isolation – a key focus of the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board. This situation is unacceptable and should be prioritised by decision makers in Suffolk.

Fundamentally, Non-Emergency Patient Transport and other transport services ensure that people leave hospital safely as soon as they are fit to do so. This has been a key focus of the Healthwatch network as highlighted in a recent national report that revealed the human and financial cost of getting discharge wrong. Ensuring appropriate and well administered access to transport services will go some way to alleviating such problems.

Healthwatch Suffolk believes simple steps could be taken to lessen some of the problems that people face and this includes improved communication between transport providers, changes in eligibility criteria to improve the experience of those who face lengthy ongoing treatments and improved signposting across services so that people know where they can find alternative help and support.

Recommendations have been made to specific organisations including the NHS West Suffolk and Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning

Groups, East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust and Suffolk County Council. These include:

- A review and improved application of current eligibility criteria and communication of that criteria to the general public.
- Signposting people more effectively with correct information about alternative services, particularly wherever people are ineligible for free transport to NHS services
- Establishing improved communications between commissioners, East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust, Suffolk County Council and Community Transport providers to begin to address gaps in services wherever possible.
- Research called “Total Transport – Getting around in rural communities”. This will be taking a person centric view, with ethnographic work in selected rural areas, looking for a creative solution to travel needs. Transport to health appointments will feature in this research.
- The reshaping of community transport in Suffolk through a new approach to procurement of services. Provision of services to health appointments will be a key component.

The State of Suffolk report published by the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board highlights improved access to transport solutions and community engagement as a key element in the prevention of social isolation and loneliness.

An early outcome has been that Suffolk County Council has agreed to establish a Health workstream of its Public Transport Forum. The link to the Public Transport Forum will mean that Healthwatch Suffolk can influence important major developments in the forthcoming year including:



## Healthwatch Norfolk

Healthwatch Norfolk has received a total of 21 comments about ambulance services. It has also conducted one piece of research.

People shared the following experiences with Healthwatch Norfolk:



| Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Story 1</b></p> <p>The commentator's wife suffered a severe stroke in 2012 and was taken to the West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust where she received good care. He felt the ambulance service was excellent.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p><b>Story 2</b></p> <p>Person said that he had called for an ambulance for his wife who had suffered a heart attack. They stated that the paramedics were excellent, working hard to get his wife (who is obese) down their stairs and into the ambulance.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p><b>Story 3</b></p> <p>Person commented that, having telephoned their GP practice with chest pain, they were told to call for an ambulance. Whilst waiting for the ambulance to arrive, the person suffered a heart attack and was taken to the Norfolk and Norwich hospital. They commented that the paramedics and team that fitted their stent were amazing and could not thank them enough.</p>                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Story 4</b></p> <p>The patient had a fall down some stairs and broke their ankle. The ambulance arrived, assessed the patient, confirmed the need for the ambulance and took them to hospital. The patient was very happy with the help provided the paramedic and ambulance crew, who they felt did their very best to transfer them to the hospital as pain free as possible. Patient could not fault the service provided.</p>                                                                    |
| <p><b>Story 5</b></p> <p>Patient had a fall and commented that the paramedics who helped her were wonderful.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p><b>Story 6</b></p> <p>Person commented that they felt the ambulance service were prompt, and very thoughtful and skilled.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p><b>Story 7</b></p> <p>The wife of a patient commented that her husband had used the ambulance service before his passing, and that the crew were wonderful in trying to save his life. The lady felt that the service had gone above and beyond their call of duty, had arrived quickly and did their best to care for her husband.</p>                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <p><b>Story 8</b></p> <p>The patient had a fall in the garden and was in a great deal of pain. Dad was present but unable to drive as he was under going a course of chemotherapy. This was explained to the call handler but the advice was that an ambulance would not be sent because the situation was not an emergency. The family had recently moved to the area so had no local support from friends or family. The patient was taken to hospital by a local volunteer. She had a broken elbow.</p> |
| <p><b>Story 9</b></p> <p>Patient has a vascular condition which requires a quick response from the ambulance service. They have no complaints and consider the service excellent. They stated that they have been saved by the service three times.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

#### Story 10

An ambulance was sent. The patient expressed that the ambulance staff were very nice. They were stuck in their conservatory with pain for about an hour before they were able to crawl to the phone. It took half an hour to transfer the patient to A and E, although the patient had expressed a wish not to be taken. Patient expressed that they had been in agony with every out breath and had no internal strength. They received no pain relief and were offered an inappropriate painkiller when one was requested in the hospital.

#### Story 11

Patient had a TIA at midnight and called for an ambulance. She was advised that there would be a 45 minute wait because of the rural location of their home. Her husband was able to come home and drive her to the hospital. She waited 3 hours 55 minutes in A&E to be told it was a headache and was then sent to the out of hours doctor who returned the patient to A&E which subsequently confirmed the TIA.

#### Story 12

Patient collapsed in their home due to inner ear infection. A relative called 999 and a paramedic responded and treated the patient. They made no further comment about the service but were disappointed by the system response following initial concern. They received no support with daily living thereafter and were only able to secure help following a helpful signposting call to a local charity.

#### Story 13

Patient called NHS 111 at 5am in excruciating pain and told by NHS 111 to go to A&E or to call 999. The ambulance arrived quickly. They were told it could be kidney stones. Despite being in A&E, the patient was advised that she would not be x-rayed in the hospital and that they would need to visit their GP for that. She was given morphine and discharged from the hospital. No transport was offered. The patient has subsequently found it difficult to make an appointment with their GP practice and remained in pain at the time of making the comment.

#### Story 14

A gentleman suffered a stroke. He stated the ambulance crew were excellent. A hole in his heart was discovered and he received immediate surgery. The gentleman feels he received fantastic service that saved his life.

#### Story 15

Person commented that they had to wait one hour for ambulance to arrive. Staff on ambulance advised they were told "not to take call 3 times before". They went against orders and answered the call anyway. Once at the hospital a number of issues were experienced because of a language barrier. The person described the department as chaos and nobody understood what was going on.

#### Story 16

Patient was taken by ambulance to the Norfolk and Norwich hospital after being told to ring for an ambulance by their GP. The patient expressed that they were made to feel that he should not have rung 999 because they were not very polite. He was suffering from sepsis and was in hospital for a long time.

#### Story 17

Patient had stomach and chest pains so rang for an ambulance. They had to wait an hour for the ambulance to arrive and felt they were not monitored at the hospital and that staff did not listen.

#### Story 18

Patient had a heart attack and travelled to the Norfolk and Norwich hospital by ambulance. A First Responder arrived to look after them and this was followed by the ambulance. Patient commented that the service was great - Really caring and put them at ease.

#### Story 19

Patient feels the ambulance service did a great job when they required the service following a fall.

### Story 20

Commentator's son, who is six months old, was struggling with breathing difficulties. Spoke to NHS 111 and were advised to go straight to A&E. They turned down the offer of an ambulance as they only live 10 minutes from the hospital. Previously paramedics have been sent out for similar reasons and told the family to make their own way to hospital as their son was not classed as being in a life threatening condition. The patient was assessed in West Suffolk Hospital A&E and his oxygen levels were deemed acceptable so we were told to go back to the waiting room. They were advised that they faced an eight hour wait in A&E and that they should complain to PALS. The family ended up going home and going to the GP at 9am to be seen where their son was given antibiotics and a nebuliser.

### Story 21

Patient had taken overdose and so an ambulance was called. The paramedics stayed with them for 2 hours and called the Crisis Team who told the crew to leave. Patient stated that the Crisis Team are very unsympathetic and have not offered any support. They gave the telephone number for MIND which was three years out of date.

## Research projects

Healthwatch Norfolk has conducted one research project of relevance to this briefing.

### The Norfolk Ambulance Survey

In early summer 2014 Healthwatch Norfolk published the results of its survey in partnership with the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust. A questionnaire used earlier in the year by Healthwatch Suffolk was modified and launched. In total, 673 people participated in the survey and 66 telephone interviews were completed.

There was mixed feedback on the time spent waiting for the ambulance to arrive; a majority (70%) of those giving a time had waited less than 30 minutes with 28% waiting less than 10 minutes. When asked how long they'd be prepared to wait for an ambulance, 30 minutes was the absolute maximum with most people opting for 10 or 15 minutes waiting.

Around two thirds of people said they might accept being redirected elsewhere when they called 999. When it came to an ambulance being diverted away from their own situation to an emergency elsewhere, 87% said they'd rather this not happen but could appreciate it might.

Nine out of ten people said they would expect a paramedic to arrive with the ambulance or emergency response vehicle. On closer questioning, 32% said they would not expect a paramedic every time and that technicians or emergency care assistants may be a suitable alternative. In general, however, people said they expected the ambulance service control centre to decide and send the most appropriate member of staff in order to meet the patient's needs. There are strong associations in the public's mind between

'proper ambulances', paramedics and green uniforms.

The feedback from people on their treatment by staff of the ambulance services was significantly positive with 90% being either very satisfied (71%) or satisfied (19%) with the service they received. Confidence in the service was high (86% of people) and 90% said they had been treated with compassion, dignity and respect at all times by the ambulance crew. People's comments on their treatment by ambulance crews were strongly complementary with many uses of the words 'professional', 'caring', 'kind' and 'compassionate'. There were no 'hot-spots' of dissatisfaction with the service in any particular geographical area in Norfolk.

Most people (87%) thought that people in general were using the ambulance service when they didn't need to do so and gave insightful suggestions as to how to define an emergency and what could be done to educate the public on the appropriate use of the service. A surprising number were in favour of charges or fines for people who misuse the service. Some suggested that if the public used the ambulance service more responsibly, more ambulances would be freed up to respond to genuine emergencies and help the service meet its targets for response times.

The full report can be downloaded from:  
<http://www.healthwatchnorfolk.co.uk/reports-and-papers/published-reports/>

## Healthwatch Cambridgeshire

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire have received a total of 10 comments about the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

People shared the following stories with Healthwatch Cambridgeshire:



| Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| <p><b>Story 1:</b><br/>Relative found their father collapsed. They could not fault the ambulance service, which arrived quickly. The relative described the staff as kind, unhurried, thorough, professional, funny and delightful.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p><b>Story 2</b><br/>Commentator said that an ambulance was requested by their doctor. It arrived within minutes and transported them to Addenbrookes hospital where they received treatment.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p><b>Story 3</b><br/>A caller stated that they had been expecting Patient Transport to attend a health appointment. They waited for over three hours but no-one turned up. The caller was told that they were not on the list and that someone else had been picked up who did not need transport. Caller had been receiving the service for some time without concern but then had a change of driver and is now worried about attending future appointments.</p> |
| <p><b>Story 4</b><br/>The patient had an appointment to see a consultant at Addenbrookes to have their dressings changed. PTS transport was arranged a couple of days prior to the appointment. It did not turn up. Patient was advised by East of England Ambulance Service that they had problems on that day so the transport would not be attending. Patient's dressings were not changed that day as a result.</p>                                             |
| <p><b>Story 5</b><br/>Person said that they had received excellent service from East of England Ambulance Service, which arrived quickly and enabled the Hinchingsbrooke Hospital to counter several serious health issues.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p><b>Story 6</b><br/>Commentator stated that the recovery from a stroke had been affected by a lack of speed and observation by the Ambulance service (and others). Family strongly suspected stroke at time due to indistinct speech and loss of movement on left side. Although the original response to the call was good, there was a long wait for an ambulance to take the patient to hospital (2 hours).</p>                                                |
| <p><b>Story 7</b><br/>Person said that the ambulance service arrived quickly and dealt with a patient brilliantly when they called on behalf of a customer.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p><b>Story 8</b><br/>Patient fell and broke their hip. They stated that the paramedic and ambulance crew could not have been more professional or caring.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Story 9</b><br/>A relative shared their feeling that opportunities were missed by paramedics (and others) to help a patient who later committed suicide.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p><b>Story 10</b><br/>A relative was unhappy with the response received after an elderly patient fell outside. There was a significant exposure to the cold weather. They have been trying to complain through PALS to no avail.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

## Healthwatch Essex

Healthwatch Essex has received a total of 9 comments about the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

People shared the following stories with Healthwatch Essex:



| Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| <p><b>Story 1</b></p> <p>Caller explained that an emergency call was made to 999 in the morning however there were problems with the ambulance (break down) and with transporting the patient leading to 11 paramedics being in the house at one time (this was due to a step). The patient was not transported to hospital until after midnight the same day.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Story 2</b></p> <p>Patient became very unwell and a doctor attended sometime after an initial request for a call out had been made to their GP practice. An ambulance was called however it was not classed as an emergency and took seven hours to arrive. The patient later passed away shortly after arriving at the hospital.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p><b>Story 3</b></p> <p>Patient was transported home and left by ambulance from hospital. They felt very unwell as they had not had their medication and there was none at home. The caller received an apology from the service.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p><b>Story 4</b></p> <p>Family members called 999. The service reacted promptly to the call and stayed on the phone reassuring the family members until the paramedic arrived. The patient stated that the First Responder was brilliant and quickly realised he would need support from an ambulance crew to extract the patient from the property. The patient described the care as "faultless".</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p><b>Story 6</b></p> <p>Patient called their GP practice which referred them onto NHS 111. The on call doctor requested an ambulance. It took 3 hours to arrive as the first ambulance navigation system was not working and the crew got lost. Eventually a second ambulance attended.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b>Story 7</b></p> <p>Patient rang the East of England Ambulance Service because they wanted to request that, should they require an ambulance in future, they are taken to a hospital of their choice. The service told them that, in an emergency situation, its remit is to take the casualty to the nearest hospital with an A&amp;E department. This, they were informed, is to make sure the patient receives best and most timely treatment, as well as negating costs in terms of fuel and the possibility of losing a crew for hours/whole shifts while they wait at another hospital. The final advice was that, if the patient obtains a letter from their consultant stating that their care should be elsewhere, the ambulance service can log it on their system and the patient will be taken there in a NON-EMERGENCY situation.</p> |
| <p><b>Story 8</b></p> <p>A doctor asked paramedics if they could treat a patient in the practice car park, as it was time to lock up. The paramedics made it clear that it is not appropriate to move a patient having an asthma attack, let alone a child, out to a car park to treat them.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p><b>Story 9</b></p> <p>Patient's relative could not praise the ambulance service enough, as they have been fantastic throughout the extended treatment of their mother.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

Local Healthwatch across the East of England would like to thank everyone that has taken the time to submit their experiences (good or bad) to inform this campaign. Your feedback will be used to inform the Care Quality Commission inspection of the service in April 2016.

If you have a question about this document or would like some more information about the Healthwatch network, please contact Healthwatch Suffolk on 01449 703949 or by email to [info@healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk).





**If you have something to say about a health or social care service in your local area, please contact your Local Healthwatch. You can find contact details by visiting the Healthwatch England website.**