



Devon Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Title	South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT) – Performance update and report
Main aim	To provide an update on projects, performance and activity during September 2021.
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1. Background

SWASFT has responsibility for the provision of ambulance services across an area of 10,000 square miles which is 20% of mainland England. The Trust covers the counties of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and the former Avon area (Bristol, Bath, North and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire).

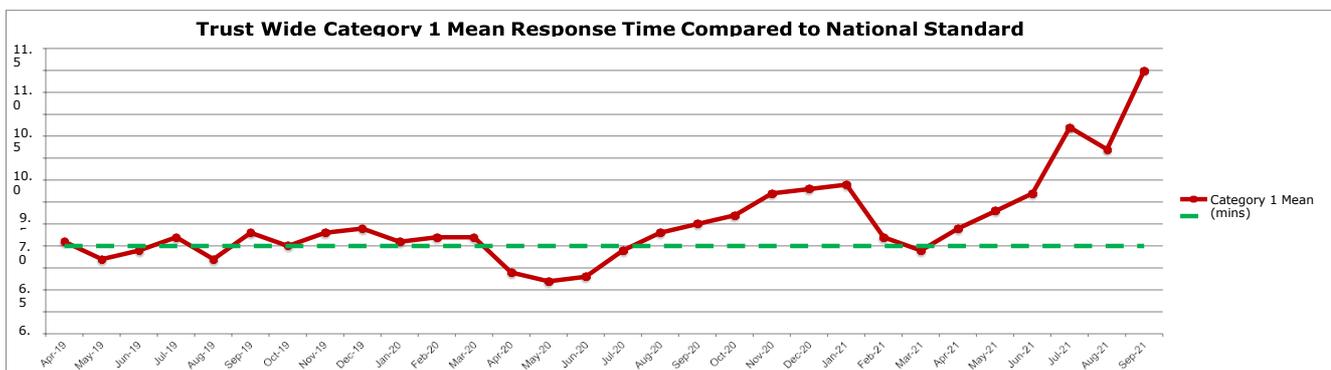
The Trust serves a total population of over 5.5 million and is estimated to receive an influx of over 23 million visitors each year. The operational area is predominantly rural but also includes large urban centres including Bristol, Plymouth, Exeter, Bath, Swindon, Gloucester, Bournemouth and Poole.

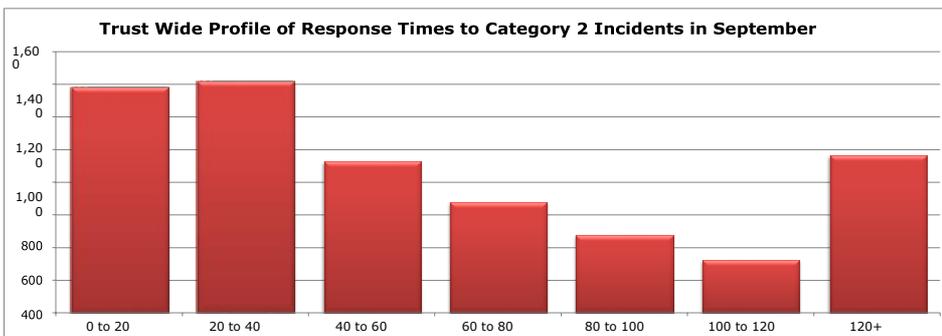
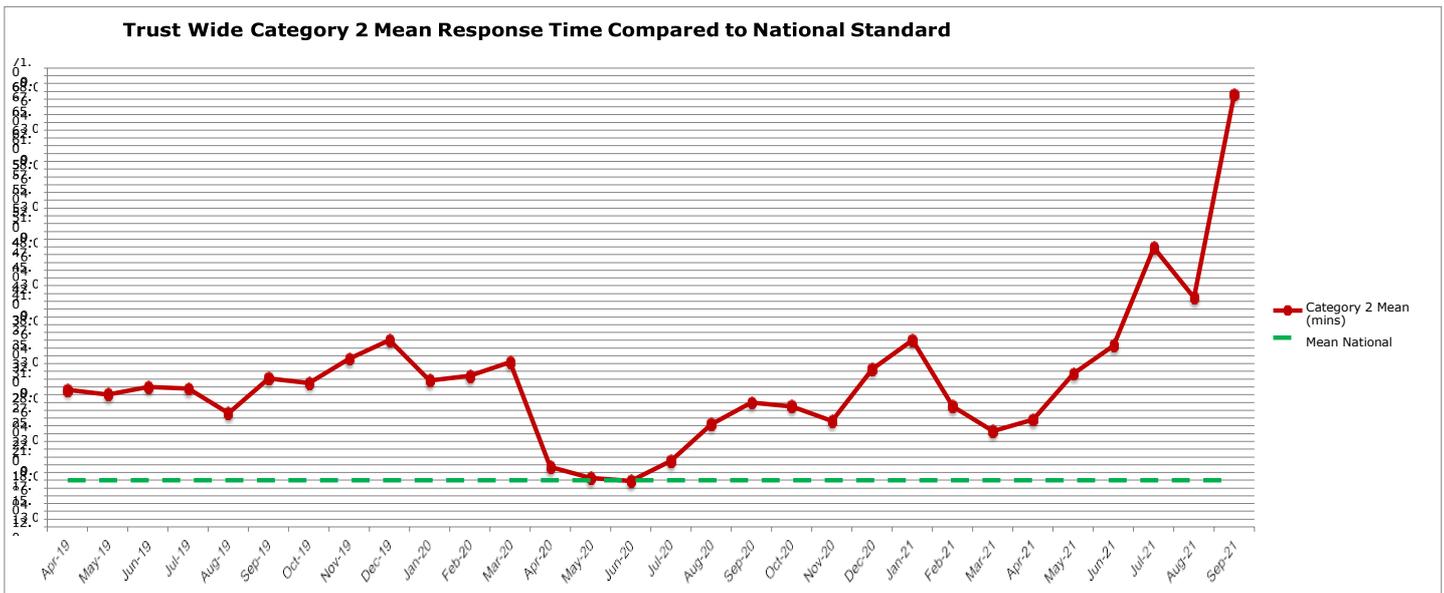
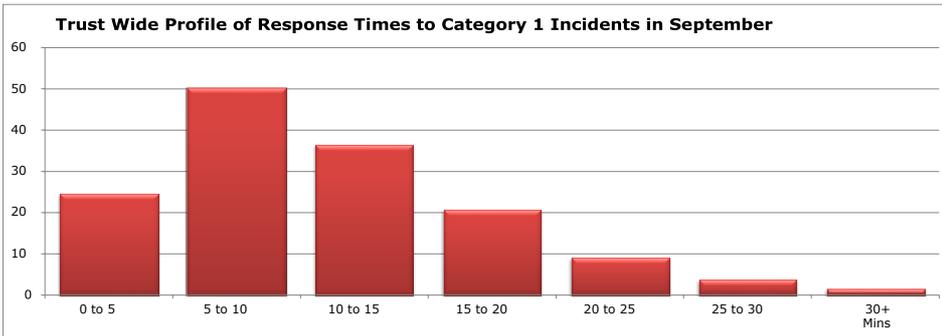
2. Performance September 2021

During September the Trust responded to 88,552 incidents across the South West – this was an average of 2,952 per day and 7,498 incidents more than the same period last year.

The National Ambulance Quality Indicator data published by the NHSE/I for September showed that SWASFT had the longest Category 1 (CAT 1) and Category 2 (CAT 2) mean response rates in the country at 11 minutes and 66 minutes respectively.

The challenges we’re facing as a Trust are not felt alone. The report shows that during September 2021, CAT1 and CAT2 response times for all ambulance services across England were the longest ever since data was first collected in April 2018. The number of 999 calls answered each day was also the second highest ever, after July 2021.







3. Factors impacting on performance

3.1. Demand

The Trust has been experiencing activity increases since the easing of lockdown measures in May 2021, with further rises across June, July and August.

Weekly incidents ran at over 20,000 incidents for 25 consecutive weeks from the start of May, compared to levels prior to COVID-19 which were around 18,000 incidents per week.

To put this in perspective, during the previous two years (2019/2020) the trust has only reported 2 weeks above 20,000 incidents, both of which fell over the Christmas and New Year period in 2019 when activity is traditionally busier.

Ambulance incident numbers across the South West throughout September continued to be significantly higher than historic levels. During September we experienced five consecutive days where daily incident numbers exceeded 3,000 or approximately a new incident every 25 seconds.

To put this into context only 19 individual days in the history of the Trust have exceeded 3,000 incidents and only 6 of those days were outside the busy Christmas and New Year period.

This unprecedented and sustained demand resulted in the trust declaring a major incident on 7 September until 10 September. Moving to a major incident is a decision the Trust does not take lightly but allows us to better manage and tackle the high levels of demand we are currently facing and implement a number of measures around resourcing, call handling, triaging patients, and meal breaks.

3.2. Abstraction rates

As seen across other areas of the Healthcare system, SWASFT is experiencing workforce pressures with reductions in the operational frontline resourcing levels available due to high levels of abstraction.

These abstractions include high levels of sickness (in excess of 10% at present) plus abstractions in relation to COVID-19 sickness and isolation which are around 5% on top of the sickness at present.

This is limiting the Trust in any ability to increase the operational resources on the road to meet any surges in demand, especially at this time of the year when annual leave levels are at their peak.

3.3. Handover delays at acute hospitals

By far, the most significant impact on performance is the length of time it's taking us to hand over many patients into busy hospitals, which is higher than we've ever seen before.

We are currently losing around 750 hours per day to handover delays at hospital emergency departments, compared to around 400 hours per week two years ago. This results in many ambulances queuing outside hospitals, and unable to respond to other emergency calls.

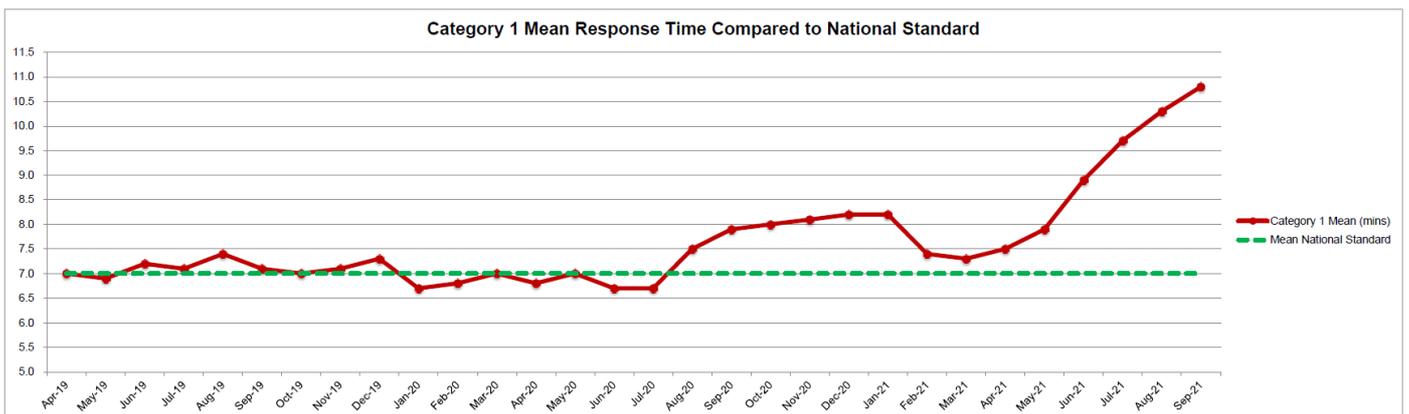
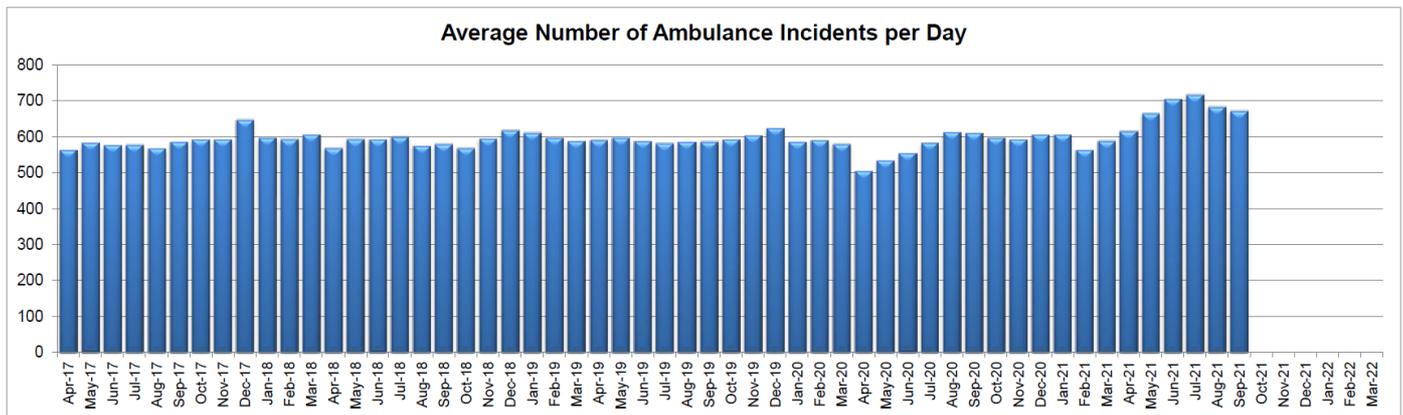


During w/c 6 September 2021 the Trust lost over 5,609 hours to handover delays in excess of the 15 minute target. That is the equivalent of 510 ambulance shifts being lost (an average of 73 shifts lost per day).

These levels have become intolerable and it's an absolute priority for us and for our NHS partners to reduce these delays, so crews can get back out on the road for other patients.

4. Demand – Devon

The Trust responded to 20,148 incidents across Devon during September which is up by 1,834 compared to the same time last year. This was an average of 672 incidents per day. On average there were 68 Cat 1 incidents per day, throughout September, requiring a response at scene. Of these 55.5% received a response within 10 minutes, 80.6% of incidents received a response within 15 minutes and 98.1% of incidents received a response within 30 minutes.





5. Operation Braidwood

As part of the Trust's wider response to the pandemic, the five fire and rescue services within the south west, including Devon, continue to support SWASFT by providing a cadre of fire fighters to drive ambulances and work alongside SWASFT clinicians, known as Operation Braidwood. These fire fighters, who already have blue light driving skills, have undertaken additional training and hold a skills passport to ensure they are able to safely support the delivery of patient care alongside SWASFT crews. The current agreement between SWASFT and the five Fire and Rescue Services will see Operation Braidwood continue until the end of the year.

6. Community First Responder update

The Devon area is supported by two community first responder teams with two lead members of staff each – one in North and East Devon and the other in South and West Devon.

6.1. Community First Responders – North and East Devon

- 43 volunteer community first responders
- 6 non-clinical staff responders (ECAs)
- 2 clinical staff responders (Paramedics)
- 29 of the community first responders in N&E Devon have also been trained in falls, supporting patients with non-injury falls. The responders provide good coverage to all areas of N&E Devon.

6.2. Community First Responders – South and West Devon

- 45 volunteer community first responders
- 4 non-clinical staff responders (ECAs)
- 7 clinical staff responders (Paramedics)
- 13 of the community first responders in S&W Devon have also been trained in falls, supporting patients with non-injury falls. The responders provide good coverage to all areas of S&W Devon.

6.3. Crew Welfare Car at Derriford Hospital, Plymouth

SWASFT asked our local community responder teams to support with staffing welfare cars. The welfare cars are providing much needed support for the ambulance crews waiting to handover patients outside busy emergency departments. They are providing both refreshments and an element of emotional support for our frontline colleagues.

This initiative has been well received by crews who have gone out of their way to pass on their thanks to the volunteers and the South Western Ambulance Charity. This initiative has provided an opportunity for them to maintain contact with the frontline crews. The scheme was then extended during the continued pressures.



6.4. **Level 3 Award for First Responders on Scene: Ambulance Service**

All of our community first responders have been supported to obtain the new FutureQuals Level 3 Award for First Responder on Scene qualification.

6.5. **Recruitment**

We have identified and made progress with evidence-based recruitment planning to take place in the near future.

6.6. **Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service**

Working in partnership with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service we continue to have a total of 76 fire co-responders across the whole of Devon, providing a response for our most time-critical patients.

6.7. **Defibrillators**

We continued the roll out of G5 defibrillators to our responder groups and maintained the required servicing for the medical devices. Some of these were obtained by funds from the South Western Ambulance Service Charity following our support, including personally completing a charity skydive.

6.7.1 **North and East Devon**

In addition to 178 SWASFT package defibrillators (128 community public access defibrillators and 50 static site), the team have supported 222 accredited defibrillators to join [The Circuit](#), the national defibrillator network connecting defibrillators to NHS ambulance services across the UK.

Hospital Ambulance Liaison Officers (HALO) in place 7 days a week at Royal Devon & Exeter to support ambulance handovers

6.7.2 **South and West Devon**

In addition to 124 178 SWASFT package defibrillators (72 community public access defibrillators and 52 static site) and the team have supported 359 accredited Defibrillators to join The Circuit. Hospital Ambulance Liaison Officer (HALO) in place 7 days a week at UHP (Derriford) to support ambulance handovers

Hospital Ambulance Liaison Officer (HALO) in place 7 days a week at Torbay to support ambulance handovers

6.8. **Other support**

Our volunteers moved a number of vehicles primarily supporting the prompt roll out of the new double crewed ambulances and were also involved in moving vehicles to support the G7 Summit.

We are engaging with our volunteers to ensure they access the vaccinations available to them and are supporting those are affected by COVID-19.