



Ambulance

For people who live and work in the capital

Winter 2010

999 neighbours

Volunteering to help in an emergency

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Saying thanks

Patients express their gratitude

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Capital care

Stroke treatment best in the UK

STROKE patients in London have the best access to life-saving care in the country, according to new figures.

Since February this year ambulance crews have been taking patients with symptoms of stroke – a type of brain injury – directly to one of eight specialist centres in the capital. The figures show that up until June, 14 per cent of these patients had received a life-saving procedure known as thrombolysis – up from 3.5 per cent for the same period last year.

Thrombolysis involves the use of a clot-busting drug that can help restore the flow of blood to the brain which is interrupted during a stroke. Because London's eight hyper-acute stroke units are staffed around the clock by clinical experts, they can provide this treatment almost immediately.

Assistant Medical Director Neil Thomson said: "When someone is suffering a stroke, their best chance of survival is thrombolysis as soon as possible.

"The patient will sometimes bypass their local A&E department, but an extra few minutes ambulance journey time will ensure they're getting the best level of care from a team of expert clinicians."



Good recovery: Andre Bell with, front to back, Paramedics Wesley Colyer and Joanne Martin, Stroke Nurse Consultant Maria Fitzpatrick and Deputy Unit Manager Doreen Gordon

"The ambulance crews made the right decision to take me straight to a specialist stroke hospital."

One such patient was 54-year-old Andre Bell, who started feeling unwell while driving his car in May.

He pulled over to the side of the road and dialled 999.

Within minutes ambulance staff were on scene and, after assessing Andre's condition, they took him straight to the stroke centre at King's College Hospital for the thrombolysis treatment.

He said: "I thought I might be having a stroke after recognising the symptoms from the adverts on TV.

"The ambulance crews made the right decision to take me straight to a specialist stroke hospital. I was

discharged three days later and I'm now back at work."

The average ambulance journey time for taking patients from the scene to a hyper-acute stroke unit between February and June this year was just 15 minutes.

Over 11,000 people in London suffer a stroke every year – around one every hour – and it is the third most common cause of death in the capital and the biggest cause of disability.

Inside

INSIDE the fifth edition of Ambulance News read about people in your local community who are helping to provide life-saving care and find out why patients want to say thanks.

There is also some common sense advice on how to keep warm and well this winter.

European win

THE SERVICE scooped the 'outstanding emergency call centre' accolade at a European awards ceremony last month.

Organised by the European Emergency Number Association, the awards recognise organisations that have helped to promote the 112 European emergency number. The number can be used as an alternative to 999 anywhere in the EU.

Clinical Support Manager Stephen Hines said: "We've worked hard to improve our relationships with European colleagues and are really proud to win this award. It's great for all of the staff in our control room to be recognised for their ongoing efforts."

7/7 inquests

STAFF have been giving evidence at the inquests into the deaths of the 52 victims of the 2005 London bombings.

The proceedings, which began in October and are being heard by Lady Justice Hallett at the Royal Courts of Justice in central London, are expected to continue until March next year.

A day in the life of a Community first responder

AMBULANCE staff aim to reach patients with a life-threatening condition within eight minutes. But if somebody like a neighbour or nearby resident trained in basic life support can get there sooner, a patient suffering from a



heart attack or who is in cardiac arrest and has stopped breathing will have an increased chance of survival.

Community first responders are volunteers who are trained to provide this initial treatment. They can use a defibrillator, a machine that can deliver a shock to the heart to get it started again. But just as importantly, they can provide simple reassurance while an ambulance crew is on the way.

With over 30 schemes now operating in Greater London, web designer James Gooding, a volunteer in Enfield, describes a typical day on duty.

10.27pm It's the night before my shift and I need to go to another community responder's house to collect the kit bags and the radio. We chat about the calls she's had, and I check the kit to make sure everything is in order. The equipment includes a defibrillator, oxygen, basic first aid items, and a map book.

9.51am My 12-hour shift starts at 10am, but I've already settled in to my day's work. I work from home and today I'm designing a GCSE revision website. I call the control room to confirm my shift times and call sign.

11.14am I'm on the phone to a friend when the radio buzzes into life – I'm being sent to an 11-year-old girl who is having a fit at a school around the corner. I gather my things and get in the car. We don't have blue-light training so we have to obey traffic regulations, but I'm still the first to arrive. The girl has stopped fitting and is being looked after by the school matron. I carry out some basic observations and check her pulse rate, how she's breathing and how alert she is. I pass on the details and help the ambulance crew when they arrive a few minutes later.

6.28pm I have a quiet afternoon and get a lot of work done. I'm about to start cooking when I'm asked to go to a nursing home where an elderly lady has

collapsed. She has tripped and fallen over, and has pain in her hip which she has broken before. I carry out the basic checks on scene and find out her medical history, and she's taken to Chase Farm Hospital by ambulance.

8.45pm I've just finished my supper when I'm sent to a woman with a severe headache. She regularly has migraines but feels much worse today. I take details of her condition and do my best to comfort her until an ambulance crew arrive.

10.03pm It's the end of my shift. I haven't had to use any life-saving skills today, but it's clear that simply by being there I was able to reassure the patients I saw while an ambulance was on the way.

• If you are interested in finding out more about becoming a community responder in your area, call 020 7783 2532, email acr@londonambulance.nhs.uk or visit www.londonambulance.nhs.uk/acr

FREE
An evening with us
London Ambulance Service Emergency Heart Care Event

Tell me why

Hearts don't like Mondays

Join us at a free event to find out how, over the last four years, we've helped double the survival rate for patients who collapse and stop breathing.

Hear from our Medical Director Dr Fionna Moore, Clinical Practice Manager Mark Whitbread and some of our cardiac arrest survivors.

When: 27 January 2011

Time: 5.30 – 7.30pm

Where: Robens Suite, 29th Floor, Guy's Hospital, Great Maze Street, London, SE1 9RT
Light refreshments will be served.

To find out more and book a place please contact us:

Web: www.londonambulance.nhs.uk/eveningwithus

Email: membership@londonambulance.nhs.uk

Phone: Call free on 0800 7311 388

Keep warm, keep well this winter



LONDONERS can take steps to look after themselves this winter by preparing for further cold weather.

Keeping warm over winter months can help prevent colds, flu or more serious health problems like pneumonia.

This is particularly important for the elderly and people with existing medical conditions such as heart or kidney disease who are all being urged to get this winter's seasonal flu jab.

Director of Health Promotion and Quality Steve Lennox said: "It's very important that people keep warm and

keep well in the cold weather. As well as getting the flu jab, you can take steps to avoid catching colds by always covering your mouth and nose when sneezing, washing your hands regularly and making sure you have a well-stocked medicine cabinet."

The Service is also advising people to keep a list of local telephone numbers to hand so they know who to call if things go wrong.

Useful numbers include emergency contacts for gas, electricity or water supplies, as well as social services and GP telephone numbers.

Keep Warm



Keep Well

Where to go for help and advice



Age UK can offer advice for people in later life. Call 0800 169 6565 or go to www.ageuk.org.uk

General advice and a keep warm, keep well leaflet can also be found at www.nhs.uk/winterhealth

Thanks for all the 'thank yous'



All smiles: Carl Francis got in touch through the Service's website to arrange a meeting with his lifesavers

PATIENTS are writing to the Service in ever-larger numbers to say 'thank you' to the staff who helped them.

In an average week, around 25 letters of thanks are received and it is the job of Conference, Induction and Awards Officer Abdi Ali to make sure they reach the right people.

He said: "Every year we're getting more letters and the number has increased noticeably now patients can say 'thank you' through our website.

"The majority of the letters mention the crews' professionalism, dedication and their ability to make a difficult

situation easier. And human touches often come to light – for example a blind patient got in touch to thank a paramedic who took her guide dog for a walk before she went to hospital."

Patients also contact the Service asking to meet the staff who helped them so they can pass on their thanks in person. This is particularly the case if they can't remember exactly what happened to them.

One of those patients is 51-year-old Carl Francis from north London, who collapsed and stopped breathing in July. He was recently reunited with Student Paramedics Christine

Kelly and Ben Abbott and Paramedic Jerry VanAntwerp who all helped to save his life.

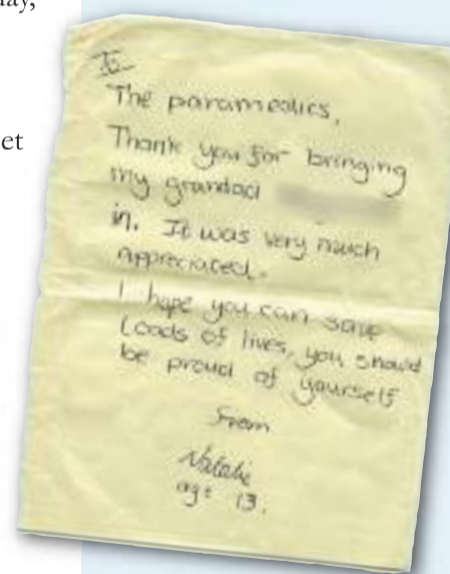
Carl said: "I don't remember anything of the day, just waking up in hospital three days later.

"I really wanted to thank the ambulance staff and meet up for coffee so I got in touch through the website."

Student Paramedic Christine said: "Thank you letters make you feel really appreciated for the work you do.

"It's always a pleasure to meet up with patients and find out what happened to them after we left them in hospital."

Just one of the hundreds of thank-yous received every year



Solo responder trial now underway

A NEW way of responding to less serious 999 calls is being trialled in south east London.

Under the system, people who phone for help but are not in an immediately life-threatening condition could receive treatment from a single clinician arriving

by car. After a full assessment, the member of staff will be able to decide the best course of action for the patient – with the options including referring them to their GP, or taking them to an NHS walk-in centre or minor injuries unit.

The single responder will be able to request an ambulance crew to attend if required, and a crew will still automatically be sent to anyone in a potentially life-threatening condition.

The idea behind the trial is to provide care that best meets the needs of patients who don't need to go to an A&E department, while also freeing up

ambulances for the most serious types of emergencies

Assistant Director of Operations Steve Sale, who is heading the project, said: "Patients will get a better service because the care we provide will be tailored to their clinical need. Put simply, we'll be able to refer them to the best place for further medical care."

The trial scheme is expected to run until March 2011, after which it will be reviewed to see if it could be extended to other areas in the capital.

- If you have any questions about the trial, please send an email to communications@londonambulance.nhs.uk, or call 020 7783 2286.

InBrief

Flying lessons



PASSENGERS waiting for flights at Heathrow Airport can now learn life-saving skills before take-off.

Ambulance staff are visiting departure lounges to give five-minute classes in basic life support skills.

The initiative is the first of its kind to take place outside the US.

Building a foundation

THE SERVICE is moving on with its plans to become an NHS foundation trust.

A business plan, setting out how the organisation wants to be working in five years' time, was approved by the trust board in September before being submitted to NHS London, the strategic health authority that the Service reports to.

It is expected that the final application will be submitted to Monitor, the independent regulator for foundations trusts, around May next year. That means the Service could be awarded NHS foundation trust status by September 2011.

Duty calls

AN OFF-DUTY paramedic has been praised for helping the victims of a train crash.

James Curtis was on his way to work in November when a cement lorry fell from a bridge onto a passing train in Surrey. He was one of the first people on the scene and helped to treat both the lorry driver and a passenger on the train.

He said: "I was shocked at the scale of the incident, but was glad to be able to help in some way."

And our survey said...

THANK you to everyone who completed the reader survey in the last issue of Ambulance News.

The responses are now being looked at to see what changes could be made, and types of stories covered, in future editions.



Have your say



Health check: The Service wants to hear from patients and the public

What does safe, high-quality care look like for an ambulance service?

Londoners are being asked for their views on what things are important to them as the Service plans to provide more information about the level of care it delivers.

Current quality measures include speed of response, survival rates following a

cardiac arrest (when a person's heart stops beating), and cleanliness.

Director of Health Promotion and Quality Steve Lennox, said: "We know our staff do a good job and we will always prioritise speed and safety, but we really want to know what else we need to get right.

"For example, how would

you know our staff were being polite and courteous? Is it by the name they address you with? Or that you feel listened to?"

Share your thoughts on how you would judge the quality of care provided by your local ambulance service by emailing quality@londonambulance.nhs.uk or visiting www.londonambulance.nhs.uk

How to contact us

In an emergency

Call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured.

Examples of medical emergencies include (but are not limited to) chest pain, difficulty in breathing, unconsciousness, severe loss of blood, serious injuries and choking.



About the care you have received

Our patient experiences team is your first point of contact if you have any comments, feedback or complaints about the service you have received from us. Call the team on 020 3069 0240 (9.30am - 4.30pm, Monday to Friday) or email patientexperiences@londonambulance.nhs.uk

About membership

We always welcome new members. If you would like to speak to someone about membership or update your details, please contact the membership office on 0800 7311 388 or email membership@londonambulance.nhs.uk

About Ambulance News

If there are any stories or issues you would like to read about, please call us on 020 7783 2286 or email communications@londonambulance.nhs.uk

www.londonambulance.nhs.uk



Feeling unwell?

Can't wait for a GP appointment?

If you need fast, convenient advice from an expert or treatment for a minor illness or injury there are a range of services on your doorstep.

- To find your nearest out-of-hours GP service or minor injuries unit visit www.nhs.uk
- For health advice call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47

NHS Direct

GP Out of Hours

Minor Injuries Unit



Make sure you Choose Well.
Get the right treatment for you and help the NHS to manage its resources.

