



# Ambulance

For people who live and work in the capital

Summer 2011

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# Royal treatment

AROUND 200 extra staff on duty in central London made sure that well-wishers flocking to the capital for the Royal Wedding got the medical treatment they needed.

The million-strong crowd was cared for by staff on foot, bicycles and motorcycles as well as in normal ambulances, alongside volunteers from St John Ambulance and the British Red Cross who set up a number of first aid posts.

Director of Operations Richard Webber, who was in charge of the Service on the big day, said: "Three months

of careful planning went into providing care for people who came to London, and it was a great success."

"There was a really nice atmosphere, in fact probably the nicest atmosphere I've known at an event in London."

Over 380 patients were treated for a range of minor illnesses, and a further 36 people were taken to hospital with more serious complaints.

Duty Station Officer Dan Barnwall was working as part of a team on foot in the crowds. He said: "There was a really nice atmosphere, in fact probably the nicest atmosphere I've known at an event in London. We were called to treat a few patients, who were all able to carry on enjoying the day after we checked them over."

Cycle Responder Tim Chivers added: "Everyone who came to London for the wedding was very well behaved, which made it easy for us."

Patient Experiences Manager David Sleep was

based in the Metropolitan Police's operations centre in central London, acting as a liaison between the police and the Service. He said: "There was a real buzz in the room as it was such a massive event."

"It was certainly quite a privilege to be able to work on the day and represent the Service during such a big occasion. I was working in a similar role at Princess Diana's funeral in 1997 so it was great to be able to cover a happier royal occasion."

**Front row: Staff join in the applause for the new Duke and Duchess of Cambridge**

## InBrief

### Stroke event a success

More than 50 people got the chance to talk to experts and listen to survival stories from patients who had suffered a stroke – a type of brain injury caused by reduced blood flow to the brain – at an event in May.

Speakers at the second 'An evening with us' event included Medical Director Dr Fionna Moore and Assistant Medical Director Neil Thomson, who both highlighted how the Service has helped to increase the recovery rate of stroke patients in London.

### 999 service is key

Ambulance services play a key role in emergency healthcare and are highly regarded by the public, according to a study by the National Audit Office.

But the report criticises ambulance services for being too focused on response targets and claims that sending multiple resources to single incidents is a waste of money.

Chief Executive Peter Bradley said: "We welcome the report by the National Audit Office and are already implementing many of its recommendations in London. In particular we are pleased that the NAO recognises the wider role the ambulance service has in delivering improved health outcomes for patients.

"We agree that efficiencies can be made and have already delivered savings by working differently in London, while making sure our patients get the right treatment when they need it."





# Coroner delivers 7 July bombings verdicts

THE 52 victims of the 2005 London bombings could not have been saved, the coroner who heard the inquests into their deaths has ruled.

Lady Justice Hallett delivered her verdicts in early May, at the end of the six-month proceedings at the Royal Courts of Justice.

Agreeing with the findings of an independent expert witness who gave evidence to the court, she said: "I am satisfied on the balance of probabilities that each of them would have died whatever time the emergency services had reached and rescued them."

However, while praising the work of staff who dealt with the incidents, she also highlighted some of the issues with the response of the Service and other agencies involved, making nine recommendations intended to prevent loss of life in the future.

In the document published after the verdicts were delivered, the coroner referred to specific problems with the Service's radio communications



**PETER BRADLEY**  
Chief Executive, London Ambulance Service

and control room systems on the day of the bombings. But she did acknowledge that "considerable progress" had been made since 2005.

**"We accept that some aspects of our response on the day could have been better"**

As Ambulance News went to press, the Service was finalising its response to the recommendations which can be found at <http://7julyinquests.independent.gov.uk>

Chief Executive Peter

Bradley said: "We are pleased that the actions and bravery of our staff have been recognised by the Coroner. They did everything they could, and through the care and treatment they provided were able to help save the lives of very seriously injured patients."

"We accept, though, that some aspects of our response on the day could have been better; communications issues affected the speed at which we were able to send crews to some of the scenes. For this reason, we are genuinely sorry if any families or survivors feel unhappy about our response."

## Changes made since 2005

The Service has made a number of significant developments and improvements since the bombings. These include:

- introducing the Airwave digital radio system (right), which works on the Underground
- replacing the old incident control room with a new purpose-built room to help manage multiple simultaneous major incidents
- sending a pre-determined response to a major incident, including 20 ambulances, 10 officers and all available emergency support vehicles carrying extra equipment
- introducing more equipment vehicles, which can deliver supplies to treat large numbers of patients
- improving the way that the process of initially assessing patients – known as triage – is carried out at a major incident, and introducing new medical equipment.



## SIGN UP A FRIEND

Invite your friends to sign-up to become a member of the London Ambulance Service.

Over 5,000 people have already joined and we are hoping to recruit another 1,000 members by the end of the year.

**Membership is free and benefits include:**

- quarterly newspaper updates
- taking part in focus groups and surveys
- influencing our future plans

Members will be able to stand for election to our Council of Governors, so if you want to represent your community or take part in voting then make sure you join today.

**Sign-up online or by contacting the membership office:**

**Freephone:** 0800 7311 388

**Email:** [membership@londonambulance.nhs.uk](mailto:membership@londonambulance.nhs.uk)

**Website:** [www.londonambulance.nhs.uk/ft](http://www.londonambulance.nhs.uk/ft)



## Service to make cost savings

THE Service has launched a five year plan to save over £53 million.

The cost improvement programme has been drawn up because the funding the Service receives every year is set to stay the same, while operating costs and demand on the 999 system are likely to rise.

Up to 890 post reductions are expected to be made over the five years of the plan, but with around 300 staff leaving each year, it is hoped compulsory redundancies will be avoided. Over 160 post reductions are planned for this year.

Chief Executive Peter Bradley said: "Unfortunately we are not immune to the financial pressures facing the NHS. This means all areas of our business will face closer

scrutiny as we look for ways to make savings while improving the care we give to patients. But with nearly 80 per cent of our budget spent on staff costs it would be impossible to make the savings required without removing posts."

**"Unfortunately we are not immune to the financial pressures facing the NHS."**

The Service is also looking at what it can do differently while still finding ways to improve the care it provides to patients.

Seriously ill patients will still be sent a medical response but more of those who call 999

£281m

The Service's annual budget

4,913

Total number of staff

162

Post reductions planned for this year

with less serious complaints will be given help and advice over the telephone or referred to walk-in centres or minor injuries units, or asked to make an appointment with their GP as already happens in some cases now.



# Finger biter convicted

A MAN who bit a student paramedic's finger while she was treating him has been given a 36-week suspended prison sentence and ordered to pay her £7,500 compensation.

Victor Almeida, 32, was drunk when he assaulted Helen Parsons while she was caring for him in the back of an ambulance on Shoreditch High Street in July last year.

Judge Inigo Bing, who sentenced Almeida at Snaresbrook Crown Court in May, said: "This is the sort of offence usually committed by a young thug."

Helen had to have the tendon in her finger surgically repaired and then splinted for three months before she could return to work. Her finger still doesn't bend or straighten.

She said: "Just as the ambulance started to move he grabbed my hand and bit me."

"I managed to get the side door open and jumped out,



**Bitten:** Student Paramedic Helen Parsons' finger after the attack and (inset) Victor Almeida

dragging him with me. My crewmate was able to prise his mouth open and free my finger."

Ambulance Operations Manager Michael Pearce said: "This case demonstrates that assaults on our staff will not be

tolerated. Ambulance crews should be able to treat patients in their community without fear of being attacked."

## Shape up for summer

IT is still not too late to boost your health and fitness for summer.

Longer, sunnier days mean it is an ideal time to improve your wellbeing and strengthen your heart.

Director of Health Promotion and Quality Steve Lennox said: "It's the perfect time of year to do even small things which can make a big difference. Regular exercise and healthy eating are great ways to get in shape and keep your heart strong."

For a healthy heart, the British Heart Foundation advises:

- Taking regular exercise – people who are physically active are half as likely to get cardiovascular disease as those who are inactive.
- Eating healthily – eating a balanced diet helps to reduce the risk of developing heart disease.

It also helps to be aware of dangers such as smoking, high blood pressure and stress – which can all increase the chance of heart disease.

If you want some help to get in shape, you can sign up to an NHS Choices summer health campaign at [www.nhs.uk/summer](http://www.nhs.uk/summer).



## Staff start training for 2012

WITH just over a year to go until London hosts the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, training has begun for those who will work at the events.

Around 200 frontline staff will provide medical cover alongside colleagues from other UK ambulance services and volunteers at Games venues across the capital next summer.

The four-day training course involves an introduction to the Service's role at the Games, what to do in the event of a major incident and working with other agencies. Another element of the training is disability awareness, including caring for patients who use wheelchairs, as well as people with visual and hearing impairments or learning disabilities.

A new guide to help staff communicate with patients where this is difficult – because of language barriers or other issues – has also been produced.

Waterloo Paramedic Sam McLaren, who has already completed her training, said: "It has helped me to understand what our role within the Games will be. It has also given me more skills and knowledge,



**Top tips:** Staff are being given a new book as part of the training

especially surrounding disabilities, which will be useful in my everyday work."

Staff also have access to an online training package that has been launched for members of

all the emergency services to help them prepare for the Games. The 30-minute programme gives an overview of safety and security ahead of 2012.

## Service gets Games logo

The Service has been given permission to use the emblem for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, in recognition of the contribution it will make next summer.

The iconic design will be used on Games-related publications, training materials and the Service



contributor to the Olympic and Paralympic Games

website that is visited by thousands of people every week.

## InBrief

### Jim says thanks



A MEMBER of staff whose heart stopped beating while he was swimming at his local leisure centre has been reunited with the people who saved his life.

Ambulance Officer Jim McCluskey (centre) said: "I'd like to thank the lifeguards for their quick actions. The treatment I received from them and my colleagues was truly professional."

Jim has recently cycled from London to Brighton raising £2,000 for the British Heart Foundation after recovering from the incident in February.

### Marathon runners raise £12,000

FIFTEEN members of staff completed the London Marathon in April, raising nearly £12,000 for the Chief Executive's charity, MERU – an Epsom-based outfit that designs and builds tailor-made equipment for children with disabilities.

And on an unusually warm race day, over 4,700 patients were treated by staff together with colleagues from St John Ambulance.

### Groom makes big day thanks to crew

STAFF helped a man with severe back pain to get to his wedding.

An ambulance crew and first responder attended Max Smith's call for help on the morning of his big day.

But instead of taking him to hospital, which would have meant postponing his nuptials, they called in a local GP to administer stronger pain relief.

With his back pain under control, Max was taken by ambulance to the Uxbridge venue in time to exchange vows with fiancée Julie.

He said: "The ambulance staff deserve to be paid a million pounds for what they do – they went so far beyond their duty and we're so grateful to them."



# Ambulances head for Mongolia



**Ready to roll: Staff with one of the ambulances they will be driving to Mongolia**

FOURTEEN members of staff will embark on the trip of a lifetime this summer as they drive six decommissioned ambulances to Mongolia.

The Service is working alongside the charity Go Help to take the vehicles 10,000 miles across Europe and Russia to the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar. After the expected five-week journey, the

vehicles will be donated to the country's developing ambulance service.

Media Resources Technician Tim Saunders is leading one of the teams and said: "It sounded like a crazy idea when first suggested nearly a year ago, but everything's now in place to start our adventure on 9 July at Horse Guards Parade.

"We've stocked up on spares to make sure the ambulances that have served Londoners for over 10 years make it safely to their destination and will have a good few years left on the road in Mongolia."

You can make a donation to support the teams by visiting <http://mongoliarallycharityevents.webs.com/>

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:communications@londonambulance.nhs.uk)

[www.londonambulance.nhs.uk](http://www.londonambulance.nhs.uk)

# Stay cool this summer

Keeping cool in the heat is common sense:

- Wear a hat and use sun cream
- Drink plenty of water
- If you have breathing problems keep your medication with you
- Avoid going out at the hottest part of the day

If you are worried about your health, contact your doctor or pharmacist, or call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47.

**In an emergency, dial 999 for an ambulance.**

