

Patient Experience – Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Answer
An ambulance crew came to see me but didn't take me to hospital. Why not?	<p>When you phone 999, West Midlands Ambulance Service aim to provide you with care that meets your clinical needs. It is part of our visions and values is to deliver the 'Right Care in the Right Place at the Right Time'.</p> <p>Conveyance to hospital may often be the most appropriate care pathway, however, we also utilise other care providers such as GP services, Minor Injuries Units, Walk-in Centres or Mental Health services, specialist nursing teams, rapid response teams etc depending on your medical requirements.</p>
An ambulance has blocked my car in - what can I do?	<p>Our frontline emergency staff will always aim to avoid obstructing other road users. If you do discover that your vehicle has been blocked in this could be due to the condition of the patient being attended to, whereby they require immediate intervention. Please be assured that the ambulance crew will move the vehicle as soon as the patient's condition allows them to. We understand how frustrating this situation may be, but we ask you to please be patient and the vehicle will be on its way as soon as possible.</p>
Can my guide dog travel with me on an ambulance?	<p>In an emergency, Assistance Dogs can be conveyed to the hospital with the patient, in the Ambulance Service vehicles, wherever possible, ensuring the ambulance is routinely cleaned afterwards.</p>
I've lost something which I may have left on the ambulance, how can I find it?	<p>In the first instance, please check all your pockets, bags, and other receptacles for your missing items. When travelling by ambulance, any items you have with you will be handed over to the staff at the receiving unit. We would therefore recommend also checking with the hospital department you attended whether they have found your missing items. If you have a lost property enquiry for West Midlands Ambulance Service, please forward this to the Patient Experience Team: patientexperience@wmas.nhs.uk or by submitting the 'contact us' form below: https://wmas.nhs.uk/contact-form/</p> <p>The Patient Experience Team West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust Trust Headquarters Millennium Point</p>

	<p>Waterfront Business Park Waterfront Way Brierley Hill West Midlands DY5 1LX Tel:0300 303 0996</p>
<p>I've seen an ambulance parked on double yellow lines - is this allowed?</p>	<p>Our ambulance crews are trained to ensure that they park vehicles in such a way that will not cause unnecessary annoyance to other road users but must also ensure that there is no delay in attending the patient. Ambulances can therefore park on white or yellow lines providing they are engaged in official duties, e.g., it was necessary to park at the given location to be as close as possible to the patient they are treating.</p>
<p>My GP said I needed to go to hospital in an ambulance - when should this arrive?</p>	<p>If a GP arranges for an ambulance to take you into hospital, then the length of time you will wait will vary depending upon your condition. There will be times when there may be a delay in an ambulance reaching you, but we will always do our absolute best to arrive as quickly as possible. When we know that a delay is likely to occur then we will endeavour to let you know as soon as possible.</p>
<p>What can I take with me in the ambulance?</p>	<p>The ambulance environment is designed to take you to hospital safely. The ambulance crew are unable to carry anything that would create an unsafe working environment, and this is particularly important if they may be required to drive at speed in an emergency. We understand that it might be upsetting to travel without a piece of equipment that you rely on. However, if you require a mobility aid, please be reassured that these will be provided for you at hospital.</p>
<p>What happens when you dial 999?</p>	<p>When you call 999, an operator will ask you which emergency service you need. You should say, Ambulance. Your 999 call will then be passed to one of our trained call-handlers in our Emergency Operations Centre (Control Room). You will be asked for details of where you are, for you to confirm the number you are calling from and details of what has happened.</p>
<p>Why was I asked so many questions on a 999 call?</p>	<p>Our Call Handlers are trained to ask certain questions depending on the nature of the 999 call. In order to gather as much information as possible and to determine the level of intervention that the patient may require, we ask you to answer honestly and as accurately as possible. Please be assured that these questions do not delay any help that we are arranging for you.</p>

<p>If an ambulance hasn't arrived, if I call back will I get an ETA</p>	<p>Our call assessors cannot provide an Expected Time of Arrival (ETA). At any point, an allocated resource to a case can be diverted to another case of a higher priority such as a category 1 for time critical life-threatening event needing immediate intervention and or resuscitation e.g., cardiac or respiratory arrest, airway obstruction, ineffective breathing, unconscious with abnormal noisy breathing</p>
<p>When are you allowed to sound your ambulance sirens?</p>	<p>Ambulance staff can activate the vehicle sirens at any time, day or night. However, they will only use the sirens when it is appropriate and necessary to make others aware of their presence.</p>
<p>Who makes the decision to send an ambulance?</p>	<p>When you call 111 or 999 you will speak to a trained Call Handler. The Call Handler will ask a number of questions about your condition. This process is called triage. The answers you give to the questions will make the decision regarding what help you require from the ambulance service/111 service. Sometimes this will be an ambulance, but sometimes this will be a recommendation to visit an NHS Walk-in centre, a GP or another NHS provider.</p>
<p>Why are the engines running in your vehicles when they are stood still?</p>	<p>Frontline ambulances are very specialist and complex vehicles. They carry essential items of clinical and diagnostic equipment that can provide life-saving treatment to patients and transmit 'real time' information to the hospitals regarding a patient's condition. Vehicles also require advanced tracking and mobile data technologies to ensure ambulances can be on scene within minutes of a 999 call. All this equipment requires significant power from the batteries on board. Failure to keep these batteries fully charged can result in equipment not working correctly or at worst shutting down which may pose a significant threat to lives. In order to keep the battery charged the vehicle must be left running during some periods of rest.</p> <p>Ambulance engines may also be left running to ensure the patient compartment, medications and equipment remain at a regulated temperature. In many cases patients are on board requiring urgent medical attention. During this time regulated power supply to all medical and diagnostic equipment is critical. Turning the engine off may result in a break to the real-time</p>

	<p>diagnostic information feed into the hospital or vital patient life support systems failing. Vehicles can often be seen idling on the roadside or at a scene for the reasons identified above. If a power supply is not available regular charging is required by keeping the engine running. Idling also allows for a rapid departure from a scene. Lastly, in cold weather, leaving an ambulance running allows the diesel engine to operate more efficiently.</p> <p>West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust is committed to continuously reducing its carbon footprint and regularly reviews systems and practices to ensure this happens via the Trust Sustainable Development Action Plan.</p>
<p>Why did it take so long for the ambulance to arrive?</p>	<p>Information regarding your clinical need is gathered during the 999 call; from there an assessment will be made as to what the most appropriate help is for you. All ambulance resources are prioritised so that patients that require emergency treatment are attended to first.</p> <p>On occasions it might be necessary to divert an ambulance that is on its way to see you to another patient who has a more serious, life-threatening clinical need. That is not to say that you will not receive an ambulance. Our staff within the Control room reassess each situation as it arises and if the ambulance was on its way to you is diverted to another patient, they will ensure that the next most appropriate resource is sent to you.</p>
<p>I saw several ambulances sitting at my local Hub. Why aren't they being sent out to emergency calls?</p>	<p>Not all ambulances are staffed all the time. Sometimes this may be down to staffing issues, but most of the time the vehicles which are kept on the Hub are for resilience. This means that if there is an issue with an ambulance which is active, such as a breakdown or if it requires scheduled maintenance, there is another ambulance for our crews to use.</p>
<p>Can I choose which hospital I go to?</p>	<p>The decision on which hospital you go to is based on multiple factors, including (but not limited to) your current condition, your current location or the pressures faced by the local hospitals. There are many specialist hospitals which deal with very specific conditions, so if you meet the criteria for these hospitals, you will be taken there to ensure you receive the best possible care for your condition. If your condition does not require specialist care, but you are in need of life saving emergency</p>

	<p>treatment, you will always be taken to your nearest emergency department. If your local hospital is experiencing an increase in demand and you need hospital treatment for a condition which is not immediately life threatening, you may be taken to an alternative hospital to ensure you are seen as quickly as possible.</p>
<p>What should I do when I am driving and see an ambulance driving towards, or behind, me with lights and sirens on?</p>	<p>Our ambulance crews are trained to drive the vehicles safely under emergency conditions. Make yourself aware of the following points to ensure that you stay calm and help our crews move through the traffic as quickly and safely as possible so that they can get to their destination without delay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look and listen <p>Check your mirrors regularly and make sure your music is not too loud.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the route and size of the vehicle <p>You may need to move over even if the emergency vehicle is traveling in the opposite direction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signal your intentions using your indicators <p>This will help the emergency vehicle and other road users know what action you are taking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pull in or move over safely <p>You may not need to stop completely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't stop opposite any obstructions <p>This will make the road narrower.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid mounting kerbs/pavements where possible <p>Be aware of pedestrians, cyclists and other motorists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signal when you are pulling away <p>Motorists behind you may still be moving, be careful when re-joining the road.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay alert <p>More emergency vehicles may be on the way.</p>
<p>Why did they ask to speak with the patient when they were feeling so unwell?</p>	<p>When you call the ambulance service on behalf of a patient you will speak to a call-handler who may ask to speak directly to the patient. This helps us to gain a better understanding of the patient's clinical need. This information then informs the type of help that will be provided to the patient.</p>
<p>Why do ambulance staff have to spend time on paperwork/tablet?</p>	<p>When an ambulance crew arrives with you, they are required to undertake clinical observations. It is also important for the ambulance staff to document the events</p>

	leading up to the 999 call and to document your condition upon their arrival. Please be assured that our ambulance staff will not unnecessarily delay in providing the most appropriate care to you.
Will arriving in an ambulance mean I get treated more quickly in hospital?	No. The Emergency Department hospital team will prioritise all patients based on their clinical condition no matter how they arrive at hospital. However, if your condition is life threatening or requires immediate attention the ambulance crew are able to make the hospital aware that they are on route.
<u>Complaints FAQ</u>	
Question	Answer
Can someone else make a complaint on my behalf?	Yes, however, to protect your confidentiality we will need to ask you for your consent in order to share our response with the other party.
What will you do with my information?	We treat this information in the strictest confidence and process it in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
How long do I have to make a complaint?	Within 12 months of the incident happening or once you become aware of the matter being complained about. If there is good reason for the complaint not being raised earlier and it may still be possible to investigate.
What if I am a child and I wish to make a complaint	You have the right to make a complaint. For example, complaints must be kept confidential except in very exceptional cases if you are at risk of harm. You don't have to put your complaint in writing, and you can talk it through with someone or get help to make a complaint if you prefer
What if my complaint involves more than one organisation?	When this happens, the main organisation involved in your care will usually take the lead in investigating the complaint and responding. They will ask other organisations involved to look into the issues relating to their organisation and provide a response or if you prefer sperate responses with your consent we can liaise and share your concerns with other organsations to investigate and respond to you directly.
Who will investigate my complaint?	An Investigating Officer will be appointed to investigate your complaint. Where appropriate, this person will keep you updated about the investigation progress and request any further information that may be required.

<p>What if I am not satisfied with the response to my complaint?</p>	<p>If you still feel that your concerns have not been fully addressed, you can seek a review by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman who can carry out free, independent investigations into complaints about NHS services in England. These contact details would be noted in any formal responses from the Trust or are available on the Trust website in the complaint section.</p>
<p>How long will it take for someone to respond to my complaint?</p>	<p>Complaints are acknowledged, either verbally or in writing, within three working days. The Trust aims to provide a response within 25 working days.</p>
<p>How can I be sure you have understood all my concerns?</p>	<p>When we write to you to formally acknowledge your concern, we will summarise the issues for investigation. If you do not feel your concerns have been captured correctly, you do have the opportunity to contact the Patient Experience Team to clarify your points of concern.</p>
<p>What if I have concerns about a registered healthcare professional's fitness to practice?</p>	<p>If you believe that your complaint is about a health practitioner's fitness to practice or poses a serious potential risk to patient safety, then you have the right to take your complaint to the relevant professional regulator.</p>