



Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE1432](#)

Main Petitioner: Mr Joseph Duncalf & Mr Anthony Duncalf

Subject: Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to initiate an urgent review of emergency ambulance provision in Scotland's remote and rural areas, such as the Stewartry area of Dumfries and Galloway, to ensure an improved response to the emergency and urgent care needs of people in remote and rural communities.

Background

The petitioners raise concerns about serious delays in the arrival of emergency ambulances in and around the Dalbeattie area of Dumfries and Galloway. The petition is motivated by a recent incident involving an 89 year old neighbour who had fallen in their bathroom. No-one could get in to see the extent of the injury and the ambulance took 45 minutes to arrive. In addition, the petitioners cite other local incidents where people had waited for long period for an emergency ambulance.

The delays are suggested to result from a shortage of vehicles and crew within the district, with only two ambulances stationed within the Stewartry district. When these ambulances are already attending calls, or an ambulance is 'off the road' for whatever reason, crews from Dumfries or Newton Stewart are relied on, which the petitioners note are further away and are, they argue, less likely to be able to meet target arrival times for emergencies. The petitioners also note there has been a call for several years to station an ambulance at Dalbeattie.

While the petitioners state people have expressed interest in the volunteer [First Responders scheme](#), they claim this has not been followed up by the Scottish Ambulance Service or NHS Dumfries & Galloway.¹

Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government have a suite of NHS performance targets (HEAT targets). NHS Boards and the Scottish Government monitor Boards' performance against these and progress is published on the Scottish

¹ There is more about this later in this briefing; with personal correspondence highlighting that NHS Dumfries and Galloway have recently been taking steps to develop the First Responders scheme in the local area.

Government's [Scotland Performs](#) website. There are HEAT standards² set by the Scottish Government that the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) are responsible for delivering. These are time based targets for emergency and urgent response:

- Reach 75% of Category A (life threatening) emergencies within 8 minutes (mainland NHS Board areas)
- Reach 95% of Category B (emergency, but not life threatening) emergencies within 19 minutes (mainland NHS Board areas)
- Reach 50% of all emergency incidents within 8 minutes (Island NHS Board areas)

Progress against the first target is reported [here](#). It shows that 72 per cent of Category A calls across Scotland were answered within eight minutes for period 2010/11, compared with 72.3 per cent in 2009/10. Figure for Dumfries & Galloway¹³ for 2011/12 and show that 66.7 per cent of Category A emergencies were answered within eight minutes⁴.

Activity to address the needs of people living in remote and rural communities in Scotland was taken forward in 2008 through the Scottish Government's [Delivering for Remote and Rural Healthcare](#). The report recognised that the capacity of the NHS to respond in emergency or urgent situations in rural and remote parts of Scotland presented significant challenges to both the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS)⁵ and to territorial Health Boards. There was concern that these challenges could potentially lead to adverse impacts on clinical outcomes for patients living in these areas. The report recommended that "robust and responsive local community emergency response systems should be developed".

The Remote and Rural Implementation Group (RRIG), working in partnership with SAS and other stakeholders, was tasked with developing a Strategic Options Framework (SOF) for emergency and urgent response that would be applicable to the varied geographical and clinical service provisions across Scotland. The [SOF report](#), published in October 2009, set out the standards expected and the responsibilities of the various organisations involved in emergency and urgent responses in remote and rural areas. The Scottish Government believes the SOF represents a significant shift in the way that the NHS responds to the emergency and urgent care requirements of people living in Scotland's remote and rural communities, with the responsibilities of various organisations involved in responding to emergency and urgent situations for the first time described in one place and supported by standards that service responses were expected to achieve. The SOF was developed as

² HEAT standards are targets that have passed their target date but are maintained to monitor their progress or used for other purposes e.g. benchmarking.

³ Dumfries and Galloway is defined as an "accessible rural area" which means areas of population are within 30 minutes of ambulance locations.

⁴ Personal correspondence with Scottish Ambulance Service.

⁵ SAS is a Special Health Board with responsibilities across the whole of Scotland to provide an appropriate accident and emergency response across a diverse geography.

a tool to be used by SAS, in partnership with Health Boards, Community Health Partnerships (CHPs) and local communities.

In June 2010 the Scottish Government wrote to Health Boards and SAS. The [letter](#), accompanied by the SOF report, was intended to draw attention to the framework and the activities required to achieve it. Implementation of SOF included a minimum requirement for all communities to have access to a Community First Responder training to intermediate level within the nationally recognised First Person on Scene (FPOS) scheme and within 30 minutes drive time. There were also a number of other activities to be implemented, which are set out in the SOF report.

[Working Together for Better Patient Care](#) is the Service's strategic framework for the period 2010-2015. It set out the role to be played by SAS in delivering on its strategic priorities, including those corresponding to the RRIG. The [Scottish Ambulance Service Annual Review 2010-11](#) reports on progress, including those relating to remote and rural communities:

- All 450 of patient transport vehicles have been equipped with shock boxes to help enable quicker life saving support for patients. This added capacity will increase potential to save lives, particularly in rural communities where geography and distance are factors.
- Joint action plans, developed with Health Boards, to introduce specific integrated service delivery models appropriate to the needs of remote and rural communities, including community paramedic schemes in a number of Board areas and establishment of the UK's first retained ambulance service in Shetland (to be expanded to other areas in future).
- Developing partnership working to deliver sustainable models for remote and rural communities, including community paramedics, retained ambulance service model and links with the volunteer community and voluntary sector. For example, working with the British Heart Foundation and the British Red Cross through its volunteer network to provide a range of education programmes, such as life-saving skills for school children, first aid for community groups and businesses.

Recent activity by NHS Dumfries and Galloway has focused on the introduction and development of the First Responder scheme in the area. There are now seven established sites in that area, with two currently in development (Moffat and Dalbeattie). The public meeting in Moffat (on 27 March 2012) was well attended, leading to approximately 20 local people expressing interest in participating in the scheme. However, no-one attended the meeting in Dalbeattie on 28 March 2012^{6,7}.

⁶ We were informed that another public meeting is to be scheduled in Dalbeattie, which will be advertised in the local press.

⁷ Personal correspondence with Scottish Ambulance Service.

Scottish Parliament Action

There is another petition currently with the Public Petitions Committee focusing on improving transport provision for older people in remote and rural areas to improve access to health, social care and wellbeing facilities and to take forward the key recommendations of the Transport for Health and Social Care report by Audit Scotland ([PE1424](#)).

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Tuesday, 22 May 2012

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