

LETTER RE PARAMEDICS FROM NHSE/I, HEE & SWAST

Dear PCD CDs

**Additional Role Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) – Community Paramedic Role
Collaborative working to support paramedics and safeguard patient services**

From April 2021, PCNs will be able to recruit community paramedics through the ARRS. Whilst this is a welcome opportunity for paramedics to strengthen the primary care workforce, there is a need to ensure this offer is sustainable; that the pipeline of future paramedics is increased; that additional primary care placements are created; and that appropriate support offers are put in place to support community paramedics in role, and also, that current patient services are not destabilised. There is a significant risk that without appropriate management, patient facing services delivered by our regional ambulance service (SWAST) will be threatened. It is to mitigate against this possibly and to open up opportunities to better support community paramedics that we write to you.

It is recognised that paramedics currently working in primary care are fulfilling an important role, not only through provision of direct patient services, but also in reducing the conveyance rate to hospital. It has also been established that paramedics directly recruited into primary care, without any portfolio or rotational role, tend to ‘burn-out’ early and are more likely to leave and return to the ambulance service. Pilots in other regions have found that offering rotational roles between the ambulance service and primary care and portfolio roles, have addressed these issues.

Work to increase the number of paramedic students coming through the universities has taken place and SWAST is intending to increase training to develop more specialist paramedics and advanced paramedics. The opportunity to place learners in general practice forms part of this expansion. This will provide learners with valuable experience in primary care, opening up future career possibilities, especially if supervised by settled paramedics within the practice. These initiatives, however, do take time to bear fruit. With current staffing levels a mass movement into primary care would destabilise SWAST emergency response capacity which would not be in the interests of any of us, nor our patients.



By working collaboratively there is a real opportunity for us in the south west to develop a community paramedic role that is well supported and sustainable and safeguards our ambulance emergency response capability and capacity. Neil Lentern, the Head of Education and Professional Development at SWAST, has been seconded to Health Education England to take this important piece of work forward. To enable this approach, we are creating a **South West Paramedic Workforce Task & Finish Group** to meet in January 2021 to address the issues outlined in this letter. We will write soon with details of the group. In the meantime, we would value your questions and feedback on our intentions by email to Paramedics.sw@hee.nhs.uk

Yours sincerely

Will Warrender

Ian Biggs

Dr Andrew Eynon-Lewis

Chief Executive
SWAST

Director of Primary Care &
Public Health Commissioning SW
NHSE/I

Primary Care Dean
Health Education England SW

