



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

From Edward Argar MP  
Minister of State for Health

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Ms Rachel Harrison  
GMB National Officer  
By email to: [rachel.harrison@gmb.org.uk](mailto:rachel.harrison@gmb.org.uk)

17.ii.2022

Dear *Rachel*,

Thank you for your correspondence of 24 October to Sajid Javid, co-signed by Mr Steve Rice, Chair of GMB National Ambulance representatives Committee, about ambulance service pressures. I apologise for the delay in replying.

The Government is committed to supporting the ambulance service to manage the pressures it is facing, ensuring that people receive the treatment that they need when they need it.

We have made significant investments in the ambulance workforce, the number of NHS ambulance staff and support staff has increased by 38 per cent since July 2010. Health Education England has a mandated target to train 3,000 paramedic graduates nationally per annum from 2021-2024, further increasing the domestic paramedic workforce to meet future demands on the service.

NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) has given ambulance trusts £55million of funding to boost staff numbers for winter. This will provide over 700 additional staff in control rooms and on the frontline to improve response times, including £1.8million to place more hospital ambulance liaison officers at the most challenged hospitals. This is alongside £4.4million to keep an additional 154 ambulances on the road this winter and a further £1.75million investment to support the wellbeing of frontline ambulance staff.

Constant central monitoring and support is also being provided to ambulance trusts from NHSE&I's National Ambulance Coordination Centre.

We are building the capacity of NHS 111 to act as the 'front door' to the emergency care system so that patients only receive an ambulance or go to A&E when needed – this includes a £75million investment in call handler and clinician staffing capacity from August 2021, boosting staff numbers by 1,100, and an increased ability to book callers into alternative services or into a timed slot at their local A&E where appropriate.

The NHS is creating the maximum possible capacity to respond to increases in COVID-19 demand over the coming weeks and months, applying their tried and tested plans to expand general and acute and critical care bed capacity, and learning the lessons from

previous waves of COVID-19 to meet any similar challenges this winter. This is alongside the largest ever seasonal flu vaccination programme and COVID-19 booster vaccines.

This builds on work over the summer under the NHS Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) Recovery 10 Point Action Plan - working across urgent, primary and community care to better manage emergency care demand and capacity.

Further substantial investments have been made to help manage this winter, including a £250million Primary Care Winter Access Fund, enabling GP practices to employ more doctors and other staff to help improve patient access and experience.

NHSEI is also providing enhanced monitoring and support to systems and providers, including a new UEC Recovery Unit to coordinate support for the most challenged systems, and intensive support to the 35 challenged hospital sites to improve their patient handover processes, helping ambulances get swiftly back on the road.

We are also investing an extra £5.4billion to support the NHS response to COVID-19 for the rest of this year, including £478million for the enhanced hospital discharge programme, helping patients get home from hospital as soon as possible, freeing up beds and supporting patient flow through hospital and improved A&E performance. This is on top of our previous historic long-term settlement for the NHS which will see NHS funding increase by £33.9billion by 2023-24, which we have enshrined in law.

Alongside significant investment in NHS 111, GP capacity, patient discharge and adult social care, we are taking a whole-system approach to winter to ensure people get the help they need when they need it, avoiding unnecessary demand on ambulances.

I can assure you that NHSE&I has established robust operational winter plans, and with the ongoing challenges of COVID-19 and the emergence of the Omicron variant, we are working closely with the NHS to ensure it has what it needs to meet these challenges.

I hope this reply is helpful, and I would be grateful if you could share this reply with your co-signatory, Mr Rice.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Argar', written over a horizontal line.

**EDWARD ARGAR MP**