



## **Update following the Health Scrutiny Panel Report into Patient Transport Services to James Cook University Hospital**

Prepared by Steph Basra, Assistant Director of Operations

Following the update in February 2009 the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) and the Tees Primary Care Trusts (PCT) have been working together to develop a partnership approach to patient bookings. There have been three meetings and any concerns or issues experienced by either the Transport Information Service (run by Tees PCTs) or NEAS are passed to the relevant managers on a daily basis. NEAS visited the offices of the Transport Information Service with patient transport vehicles to help staff visualise the capacity of the transport they are booking and this was found to be very useful. There is still work to be done and it is hoped that a regular programme of meetings and actions can be developed to enable this.

The Trust is due to repeat its PTS patient survey and is planning to repeat the usual survey to allow comparison of results. However, we also aim to undertake some focussed surveys on particular services such as renal dialysis transport and the Durham Urgent Care Transport service. In addition to this we are developing comment cards to gain both quantitative and experiential patient views on a regular (monthly) basis. The recent National Kidney Care Audit – Patient Transport Survey report has shown the overall happiness rating of hospital arranged transport (PTS) users to The James Cook University Hospital to be high (response rate - 80% of 1,000 patients). More detailed analysis of the results is being undertaken and will inform future service development.

NEAS is continuing to work with the community transport providers Future Regeneration of Grangetown (FROG) and Wheels for Freedom and meet regularly to look at service improvements and potential expansion. We have also been having discussions with some local authority transport providers to see if further integration of transport is possible. These discussions have not as yet been held within Teesside but we are keen to do so as soon as possible.

NEAS has completed its installation of a tracking and communication system to the entire fleet. All staff are currently completing their training and this will be fully operational in September 2009. We are also beginning to use electronic systems to undertake the planning of patient journeys. This does not negate the need for planning staff that will oversee and refine the plan on a daily basis but should ensure that journeys are planned efficiently. The use of an electronic planning systems places more emphasis on having the correct information at the time of booking and

therefore the ongoing improved partnership working with the Transport Information Service is key.

The introduction of a system of banding times for patients in Teesside has been put on hold pending further discussions with South Tees Hospitals as it is important that this will be flexible to the requirements of patients, hospitals and NEAS. Activity modelling work is currently being undertaken by NEAS that will inform these discussions as well as allow us to explore future models of service provision. The modelling is due for completion towards the end of September.

Elsewhere in the Trust:

The Durham Urgent Care Transport service has been fully operational since 1 April and has undertaken a number of A&E discharges from hospitals in North Tees for patients resident in Durham. It has also allowed patients to access the urgent care service that would previously have had a GP home visit or used the conventional ambulance (A&E) services as well as undertaking admissions and discharges to nursing homes etc. The urgent care service within County Durham and Darlington will be operational on a 24/7 basis from 1 October however, the transport service is already operating on this basis.

NEAS is extending the booking service that it currently provides for residents of Northumberland to those who reside in Newcastle upon Tyne.

The English ambulance services have formed a strategic PTS group that meets monthly to share best practice and inform strategic direction both within ambulance services and in the wider NHS. The NEAS Assistant Director of Operations (Steph Basra) is part of this group.

The application for foundation trust status is progressing and we are keen to encourage the public to become members and governors of the Trust. The PTS Transformation programme is a vital part of our work towards foundation trust status.

The work being undertaken to transform patient transport services is ongoing. The transformation programme is planned to complete in March 2010, however, it is anticipated that at this point a further programme of work will be agreed to ensure that PTS continues to improve and develop as part of a continuous improvement programme.