

Joint Statement Regarding Media Coverage of Bridgnorth Incident

The majority of staff will be aware of the media coverage around a case in December where it took 41 minutes for an ambulance crew to back up a community paramedic in Bridgnorth. Although the story was run on Radio Shropshire in December and on Midlands Today on Friday 4th January, it was the story in the latest edition of the Sunday Mercury (headlined “West Midlands Ambulance Service paramedics finished break instead of rescuing baby who suffered cardiac arrest”) that has caused upset. This story was not instigated by the Trust and the criticism of the attending ambulance crew being on a mealbreak was not revealed by the Trust. This information came from another source. The Sunday Mercury reporter then contacted the Trust about this and another, unreported element of the story. The story was then further reported by a number of national newspapers who did not check out their facts with the Trust in any way; this has led to several inaccurate reports being published.

It was the Sunday Mercury that made this slant to the story. Mr Passant has since gone on Facebook and other internet sites to stress his support to the crews. He is quoted as saying he “wanted to set the record straight because he was deeply concerned NHS front-line staff were shouldering the blame for David Cameron's cuts. He felt that blame was being unfairly shifted to the Paramedics who he feels do a ‘sterling’ job under the circumstances. He wants it put on record that he ‘fully’ supports front-line crews and the paramedics were simply taking the break they were entitled to. He places the blame ‘firmly at the door’ of David Cameron for cuts to regional NHS Budgets including Ambulance services.”

Staffside Chair, Stuart Gardner, said: “I would advise all staff, if approached by members of the media, to approach a senior union steward for guidance to avoid being misquoted or misrepresented.” Trust Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, added: “We are fully supportive of staff, whichever type of break they choose – disturbed or undisturbed. Staff need time to rest. Whilst the case is very unfortunate, it is deeply disappointing that certain comments, some particularly derogatory, have been made. Staff, whether in control or on the road, work exceptionally hard to try and ensure that we maintain the very highest standard of care possible. I am very proud of the work you do on a daily basis and will continue to do all I can to continue support you.”

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