

Paramedic raises concerns over changes within ambulance service



A PARAMEDIC has warned that “people will die” if areas see a reduction in “frontline ambulances”.

The East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST) has said it is currently reviewing staff rotas across the county’s ambulance stations so that “under-used resources” in areas of low demand will be moved to where they are needed most. Unison has raised concerns about a reduction of double-staffed ambulances (DSAs) and an increased reliance on rapid response vehicles (RRVs), which are unable to take people to hospital.

And now a paramedic has spoken about his concerns that in certain areas DSAs will be replaced with intermediate tier vehicles (ITVs), which transport patients to hospital who need little clinical supervision or intervention. It is proposed that Bury will lose two DSAs, Sudbury one and Thetford two.

Hayden Newton, chief executive of EEAST, has said taken as a whole the changes - which are part of plans to save £50million over five years - “will only benefit patients and staff”. But the paramedic, who wishes to remain anonymous to protect his job, disagreed with the comments. He said he was “desperately concerned” about DSAs being replaced with ITVs as he claimed they were manned by “effectively first aiders” without training in trauma or paediatrics. He said: “I am genuinely concerned about what they are doing. People will die. People are going to die.”

A spokeswoman for EEAST confirmed ITVs were staffed by those who were not as highly-trained as paramedics, but as they were transporting patients who needed little clinical supervision or intervention it was a more effective and efficient way of managing this transport need.

She added how the more highly-skilled paramedic could then be available for patients who need a higher level of clinical care.

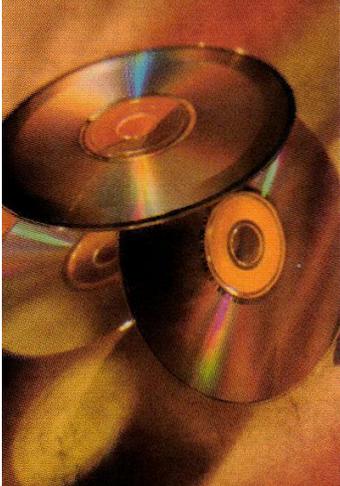
“The more tailored rotas will result in better local cover as all types of vehicles, including double-staffed ambulances, will enjoy much better protection within their assigned communities, like Bury St Edmunds or Sudbury, instead of being routinely drawn out to urban areas further afield as they are at present,” she said.

But the paramedic believed the changes would not work in Bury “because it doesn’t work at the moment”. “There’s not enough vehicles with clinically-trained staff,” he said.

He said he could not see any benefits from the changes, adding how it was “all to do with reducing costs” and “nothing to do with patient care or staff care”.
The EEAST spokeswoman said the EEAST was changing the mix of resources across the region after carrying out comprehensive demand analysis work. So there will be further ITVs - which are staffed by two emergency care assistants - in places where there is demand for them.

No staff are being made redundant as a result of the changes.

Mr Newton said: “With 900 calls a week no longer being sent an ambulance unnecessarily thanks to the work of managing calls better within the control rooms, the most intelligent review ever undertaken of the service demonstrates that, by matching resources to demand while more effectively ringfencing crews to local areas – so those areas are actually better covered than at present when they are routinely sent elsewhere – we can find a way forward while maintaining patient care, building on improved response times and keeping frontline staff at nearly double the number five years ago.”



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