

Our ambulance service needs cash injection



An operations chief at the region's ambulance service says more money is needed to meet a surge in demand from patients requiring life-saving treatment.

Emergency calls to East Midlands Ambulance Service have risen three-and-a-half per cent to 700,000 a year – and out of these the number of life-threatening calls has risen by nine-and-a-half per cent.

Commissioning bodies require the service to reach each of these life-threatening calls within eight minutes but in Northamptonshire the service has reached only 71 per cent in the targeted time during this financial year.

Yesterday, assistant director of operations Richard Clayton said new initiatives were being rolled out from within the service to ensure it achieved the marked standard next year. He also said a baseline review was being carried out and was likely to end with the service calling for an increase in annual funding.

The service, which has a fleet of 850 vehicles and employs 3,500 staff, spends £158million a year.

He said: "The growing number of calls we receive has meant demand has outstripped our assets and we have at times really struggled despite our staff working incredibly hard.

"To find out why there is increased pressure on the system we are taking a baseline review on what we need. The review is likely to lead to an application for more money – I have a figure in my head. But it is not just about the money, we are becoming more innovative and are piloting ideas which are helping improve our performance."

Initiatives include deploying staff at hospitals to assist with patient handovers and working with healthcare colleagues to prevent emergencies.