

6. Simulation Handout

Advisory Panel on Emergency Services

The National Health Service (NHS) is looking to decrease spending and has requested that regional leaders make recommendations for their review. You are a panel of regional leaders in Sampleshire tasked with evaluating the ambulance services as an area of potential spending reduction.



Sampleshire is a mostly rural region with 60,000 people spread over 7,200km². Sampleshire's most populous town, Weatherfield, has approximately 30,000 inhabitants and is located in the far south of the region. The second most populous town, Emmerdale, is located in the northeast, 130km from Weatherfield. Emmerdale has a population of 8,000. The remaining population is scattered somewhat evenly around the region, with some smaller population centres.

Sampleshire ambulance services currently operate out of three service centres. Although functional, ambulance services do not meet current standards. The condition of the infrastructure is deteriorating and is about the same at all three ambulance centres. Within the next 6 years, emergency vehicles and equipment will need updating and replacement.

Here are some things you need to know in order to understand the problem.

- In the last year, the NHS set a target that 75% of life-threatening calls will be responded to within 8 minutes.
- 76% of life-threatening calls are responded to within 8 minutes within Weatherfield. While this number meets the standard, it is relatively low considering its close proximity to an ambulance service centre.
- The fatality rate for life-threatening calls is 20% when calls are not responded to within the first 15 minutes.
- Currently 88% of calls in both Weatherfield and Emmerdale are responded to within 15 minutes.
- The travel time for ambulances between Weatherfield and the northern border of Sampleshire is 55 minutes.
- Lack of newer equipment and training has been blamed for an estimated 35% of deaths which occurred while residents were being treated by paramedics.
- The current fatality rate is 11% of all emergency services requests.

Concerns

- To eliminate one ambulance service centre, which would free up funding for upgrades in the remaining centres, would mean that those outside of the two towns would likely bear longer response times.
- There is no current plan for improving EMS infrastructure or increasing funding for training.

Recommendation #1: Centralise ambulance service centres & pool resources.

Reason: By eliminating one of the ambulance service centres, Sampleshire will save £9.5m per year, half of which could be returned to the ambulance trust for training and improvements to infrastructure.

Reason: Local response times in Weatherfield and Emmerdale would be improved by reinvestment in training and infrastructure, substantially surpassing the 75% benchmark set forth by the NHS.

Reason: In improving response times and infrastructure, ambulance services would reduce the fatality rate in the most densely populated areas, saving more lives overall.

Recommendation #2: Do not centralise EMS service centres and refuse to recommend ambulance service budget cuts.

Reason: The two towns and the rural population are being served by the three ambulance service centres. Closing any location would mean a higher number of fatalities in rural areas due to the inability of ambulances to get there in a timely manner.

Reason: Improving response times and decreasing the fatality rate for those in Weatherfield and Emmerdale at the expense of rural residents is unjust. Although it would save more lives overall, it is inequitable in its approach.

Reason: There are other ways to raise funds for training and infrastructure. Those alternatives are worth exploring before cutting services and potentially risking lives in rural areas.