



INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE LCHS4003

Component 1: Portfolio – Two Tasks

Student Name: Ornella Siobhan Kela Cunningham

Student Number: 2523187

Lecturer: Ping Wu

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Explanation of the healthcare service

NHS ambulance services provide emergency and urgent healthcare to people across the United Kingdom. Their main role is to respond to medical emergencies, provide immediate assessment and treatment and transport patients to appropriate healthcare services when required (Glasby, 2021).

Ambulance services deal with a wide range of emergencies, including cardiac arrests, strokes, serious injuries, breathing difficulties and life-threatening illnesses. However, modern ambulance services deliver more than transportation. Paramedics are highly trained healthcare professionals who are able to assess, diagnose and treat patients at the scene, sometimes reducing the need for hospital admission (Alexander and Runciman, 2020).

Ambulance services are delivered through NHS ambulance trusts across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They work alongside hospitals, GPs, community healthcare teams and other emergency services to ensure patients receive appropriate care (NHS England, 2025).

The service operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing essential emergency healthcare and supporting the wider NHS system.

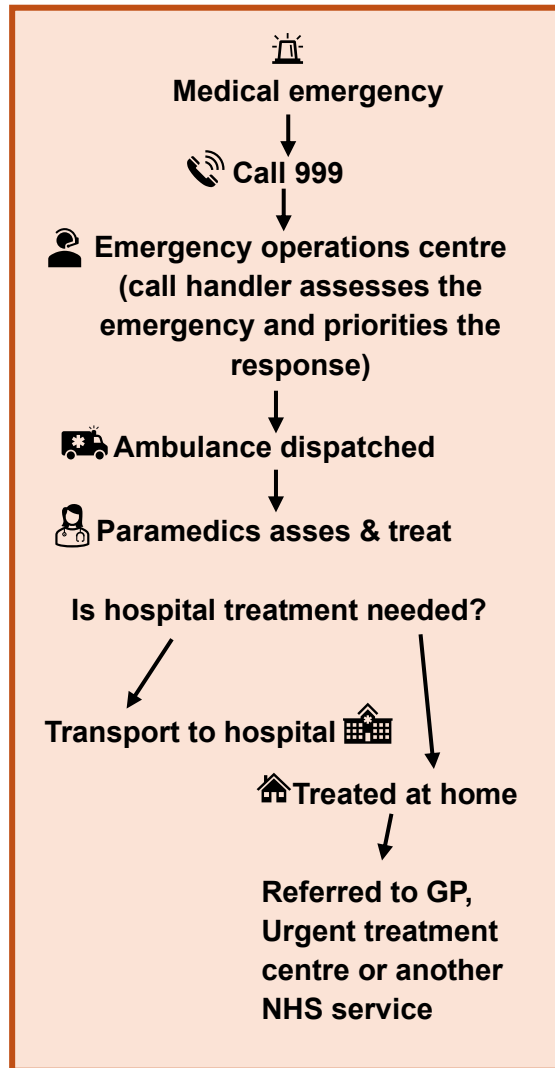


Figure 1. Pathway of an NHS ambulance response from 999 call to patient care.



Figure 2. Photos of the evolution of ambulance vehicles throughout the years. Source: London Ambulance service NHS trust (n.d).



Figure 3. Photograph of horse and carriage ambulance in 1893. Source: Living London History (2025).

History of ambulance services

The role of ambulance services has changed significantly over time. Early ambulance services mainly focused on transporting patients, particularly those injured or seriously ill, to hospital. Following the creation of the NHS in 1948, ambulance services became an important part of publicly funded healthcare provision (Glasby, 2021).

During the twentieth century, ambulance services developed from transport-based services into advanced emergency healthcare providers. The introduction of paramedic roles improved medical equipment and better communication systems allowed ambulance staff to provide treatment before patients reached hospital (Alexander and Runciman, 2020).

Today, ambulance services use advanced technology, specialist vehicles and highly skilled healthcare professionals to provide urgent and emergency care within communities. This development reflects the wider change within healthcare towards providing more treatment outside traditional hospital settings (Naidoo and Wills, 2021).

Current functioning of NHS ambulance services

NHS ambulance services operate through regional ambulance trusts that manage emergency responses and patient care. When an individual contacts 999, trained call handlers assess the situation and prioritise the response according to the seriousness of the patient’s condition (NHS England, 2025).

Ambulance teams include paramedics, emergency medical technicians and emergency care assistants. Paramedics can provide a range of treatments, including pain relief, oxygen therapy, cardiac care and emergency interventions (Alexander and Runciman, 2020).

The role of ambulance services has expanded beyond transporting patients to hospital. Paramedics increasingly provide care within the community by treating patients at home, supporting people with long-term conditions and referring individuals to appropriate healthcare services when hospital admission is unnecessary (Glasby, 2021).

Technology is also an important part of ambulance care. Digital communication systems allow ambulance crews to share information with hospitals, access patient details and make decisions about the most appropriate treatment pathway (NHS England, 2025).

Ambulance services also work closely with police, fire services and healthcare organisations during major incidents, ensuring coordinated emergency responses.

Conclusion

NHS ambulance services are a vital part of the UK healthcare system, providing emergency treatment, urgent care and community healthcare support. Although ambulance services have developed significantly through advances in paramedic practice and technology, they continue to face challenges including increasing demand and workforce pressures. Continued investment and improvement are required to ensure safe and effective emergency care for patients.



Figure 4. Photo of control room staff. Source: London ambulance service NHS trust (n.d)

Modern ambulance services use innovative communication technology to help coordinate emergency responses and improve patient outcomes across the healthcare system.

Ambulance response times: targets and recent performance				
England, minutes:seconds and hours:minutes:seconds				
Category	Average response time		90th percentile response time	
	Jan 2025 performance	NHS target	Jan 2025 performance	NHS target
Category 1	8:16	7:00	14:46	15:00
Category 2	35:40	18:00	1:16:26	40:00
Category 3	1:55:25	No target	4:29:18	2:00:00
Category 4	2:19:28	No target	5:11:06	3:00:00

Figure 5. Table showing performance against ambulance response time targets in England. Most targets were not met in January 2025. Source: Commons library (2025).

Challenges faced by NHS ambulance services

Challenge 1: Increasing demand and pressure on services

One of the biggest challenges facing ambulance services is increasing demand. An ageing population, increased numbers of people living with long-term health conditions and greater reliance on emergency healthcare have placed additional pressure on ambulance teams (Naidoo and Wills, 2021).

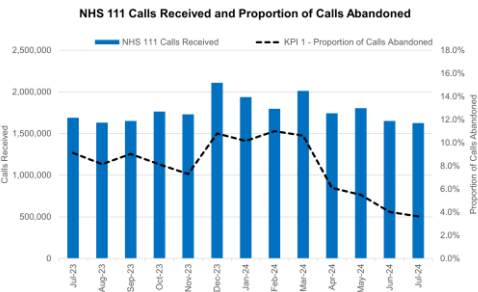
High demand can contribute to longer response times, increased workloads and pressure across the wider NHS. Ambulance services must balance responding quickly to life-threatening emergencies while ensuring resources are used effectively (NHS England, 2025).

Challenge 2: Workforce pressures and staff wellbeing

Another challenge is maintaining a skilled and supported workforce. Ambulance specialists often work in highly stressful environments involving trauma, serious illness and unpredictable situations. This can contribute to workplace stress, burnout and difficulties retaining experienced staff (Care Quality Commission, 2023).

Staff shortages can increase pressure on existing employees and affect the ability of services to meet demand. Improving recruitment, staff wellbeing support and working conditions are important factors in maintaining effective ambulance services (NHS England, 2025).

Figure 6: NHS 111 calls received and proportion of calls Source: NHS. 2024



Residential care homes are a vital part of the UK's health and social care system. They provide accommodation, personal care and support for individuals who are unable to live independently due to age, disability or other support needs (NHS, 2025). Unlike nursing homes, residential care homes do not typically provide 24-hour nursing care instead they offer support with everyday activities such as washing, dressing, eating, taking medication and participating in social activities. As the UK's population continues to age, residential care homes play an increasingly important role in promoting wellbeing and supporting vulnerable people (Glasby, 2017).

The start of residential care in the UK can be traced back to the Poor Laws of the sixteenth century, during that time local parishes were liable for supporting people who could not care for themselves. During the nineteenth century, the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 introduced workhouses, where older adults, people with disabilities and those living in poverty frequently received institutional care. Yet, workhouses were widely criticised for their bleak conditions and lack of dignity. Following the creation of the National Health Service (NHS) in 1948 and the National Assistance Act 1948, the workhouse system was eradicated and replaced with more organised social care services. Over time, residential care homes evolved into person-centred environments that focus on dignity, independence and individual choice rather than institutional care (Glasby, 2017).

In this present time, residential care homes provide 24-hour support for people who need help with everyday living but do not need continuous nursing care. Care staff aid residents with personal care, meals, medication, housekeeping and recreational activities while encouraging them to stay as independent as possible. Residential care homes work closely with GPs, district nurses, occupational therapists and other healthcare professionals to guarantee that residents receive holistic care. In England, all residential care homes are regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), which inspects services against standards relating to safety, effectiveness, caring, responsiveness and leadership (Care Quality Commission, 2025).

Whilst residential care homes provide valuable support, they are also faced with several challenges. Increasing demand resulting from an ageing population has placed pressure on the social care sector, while workforce shortages and recruitment difficulties can affect the stability and quality of care (skills for care, 2025). Financial stresses experienced by local authorities and care providers have also made it harder for some services to meet growing demand but despite these challenges, many residential care homes continue to improve standards by adopting person centred approaches that involve residents in decisions about their care, respect their preferences and promote their independence (Wills, 2022).

Residential care homes make a substantial contribution to improving the quality of life of service users. They present a safe environment where residents receive assistance with everyday activities while maintaining as much independence as possible. Many homes arrange social events, exercise programmes and recreational activities that reduce loneliness, encourage friendships and improve mental wellbeing. Personal care plans guarantee that each resident's physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual needs are recognised and respected. Families also profit from knowing that their loved ones are receiving professional care in a safe and supportive environment. By promoting dignity, social inclusion and person-centred care, residential care homes help individuals maintain a better quality of life even when they are no longer able to live independently (Glasby, 2017; Wills, 2022).

In conclusion, residential care homes have advanced significantly from the institutional care provided under the Poor Law system to modern services that prioritise dignity, independence and person-centred care. Even though challenges such as workforce shortages and increasing demand are still prevalent, residential care homes continue to play a very important role in providing support for vulnerable people across the UK. Their contribution goes way beyond meeting physical care needs, helping residents maintain independence, social relationships and overall wellbeing.

References

Care Quality Commission (2025) *Adult social care: information for providers*. Available at: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-regulation/adult-social-care> (Accessed: 1 July 2026).

London ambulance service NHS trust (n.d) Photos of the evolution of ambulance vehicles throughout the years. Available at: <https://www.londonambulance.nhs.uk/about-us/our-history/our-history-a-timeline/> (Accessed: 2 July 2026).

Living London History (2025) Photograph of horse and carriage ambulance in 1893. Available at: <https://livinglondonhistory.com/celebrating-60-years-of-the-london-ambulance-service/> (Accessed: 2 July 2026).

Glasby, J. (2017) *Understanding Health and Social Care*. 3rd edn. Bristol: Policy Press.

London ambulance service NHS trust (n.d) Photo of control room staff. Available at: <https://www.londonambulance.nhs.uk/working-for-us/career-opportunities/control-room-staff/> (Accessed: 7 July 2026).

Commons library (2025). Table showing performance against ambulance response time targets in England. Most targets were not met in January 2025. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2025-0042/> (Accessed: 8 July 2026).

NHS (2025). *Introduction to care and support*. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/introduction-to-care-and-support/> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

NHS England (2025). *Urgent and emergency care*. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/urgent-emergency-care/> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

Skills for Care (2025). *About us*. Available at: <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/About-us/About-us.aspx> (Accessed: 12 July 2026).

Wills, J. (2022) *Foundations for Health Promotion*. 5th edn. London: Elsevier.

NHS England (2024). NHS 111 calls received and proportion of calls abandoned. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/monthly-operational-statistics-september-2024/> (Accessed: 15 July 2026).