

Paper 6: Healthwatch Rutland and Healthwatch West Northamptonshire's Response to the EMAS Quality Account for 2025-2026

Thank you for providing Healthwatch with the 2025-2026 EMAS Quality Accounts. We appreciate the opportunity to review the service delivery and developments over the past year and to hear about the ongoing work and improvements in your service. We acknowledge the complexity of services offered locally, and we value your continued openness and clear commitment to improving care and safety for people across the East Midlands.

We recognise the significant operational pressures faced by ambulance services nationally, as demand for urgent response continues to rise across our communities. Despite these challenges, it is encouraging to see measurable improvements in response times, investment in service development, and continued efforts to improve patient care across the region.

The report outlines a wide range of measures designed to create a positive working environment for staff, with clear efforts to support their safety, wellbeing, career development and training. We welcome the strong compliance reported in statutory and mandatory training for staff, reflecting a continued commitment to ensuring that the workforce is aligned with best practices and puts quality care first. We felt that EMAS had worked to ensure staff were supported where possible, including staff wellbeing initiatives, such as the Mental Health First Aider Training, ensuring staff mental health was at the forefront.

We also welcome the inclusion of ongoing academic research projects, which represent an important and valuable contribution to the Trust's service improvement efforts.

We were pleased to learn about the expansion of the Clinical Hub. The significant increase in supporting over 14,000 patients each month and reducing unnecessary ambulance trips has an impact on our communities and the EMAS service. We feel that this is a positive step in ensuring that patients receive the

right care, in the right place, at the
neighbourhood care.

right time, aligning well with

We commend EMAS for its commitment to incorporating patients' experiences. The draft report highlights meaningful efforts to keep patients safe, support them and their families and ensure that issues are addressed transparently and used as learning opportunities in line with the Duty of Candour. Our Healthwatch organisations welcome the strengthened focus on patient experience, including the use of patient stories at board meetings and the move toward a Patient Safety Partner model.

We support efforts to embed person-centred care and strongly emphasise the importance of ensuring that the experiences of people in rural areas, such as Rutland, meaningfully inform future improvements. We encourage a continued focus on strengthening communication with patients and families during periods of delay, as well as ensuring people feel informed, reassured, and treated with compassion throughout their care journey.

However, we would welcome stronger supporting data to evidence the improvements described. The Infection Prevention section outlines a range of proactive measures, yet the lack of outcome data makes it difficult to judge their effectiveness. Similarly, Appendix 2 Baseline Metrics presents comparisons between the 2023 baseline and 2024 metrics, but the absence of 2025 data limits the ability to understand trends, assess if progress is sustained or identify emerging concerns.

We also note Quality Priority 1: 'Reduce avoidable harm from delayed care.' Ambulance response times in Rutland have historically been consistently poorer than in other areas within the EMAS region, particularly for Category 1 calls. This is an issue Healthwatch Rutland has raised consistently over several years, with little tangible improvement. We hope to see meaningful improvements in response times from 2026 to 2027 onwards to ensure Rutland residents receive timely and safe care.

To support readability, we recommend that the final report expands all acronyms on first use within the narrative and includes them in the glossary. In the draft

account, some acronyms are expanded in text but not listed in the glossary, and vice versa; several appear in neither, making the document hard to interpret.

We would also like to note our disappointment regarding the limited engagement between EMAS and Healthwatch West Northamptonshire during the past financial year. In particular, we experienced a lack of response to communications and a gap in attendance at our meetings, which reduced opportunities for collaborative discussion around patient experience and service improvement.

We greatly value partnership working and recognise the importance of maintaining strong relationships between local services, as this allows us to share our community feedback and input on changes within the system. We hope to see more consistent engagement and communication moving forward, to ensure the experiences and concerns of local people continue to inform service development and quality improvement.

We wish EMAS every success in its ongoing programme of continuous improvement, particularly given the significant pressures facing ambulance services. We also extend our thanks to the hard work and dedication of all the staff who serve communities across the region, often supporting people at some of the most vulnerable moments in their lives. We appreciate EMAS's continued commitment to improving patient care and look forward to opportunities for stronger collaboration in the future to ensure local voices remain central to service improvement.

Sincerely,

Gabriella Van Beek
HWW Operations Manager

Tracey Allan-Jones
Healthwatch Rutland Manager

May 8th, 2026





Connected Together
First for Community Engagement

healthwatch
West Northamptonshire

healthwatch
Rutland