



Ein cyf/Our ref VG/00244/20

Janet Finch-Saunders AM  
Chair, Petitions Committee National Assembly for Wales  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

20 February 2020

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 27 January on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding the categorisation of ambulance calls relating to stroke.

I expect all patients who access the ambulance service to receive a timely response commensurate with their clinical need and for all patients in Wales to receive the care they require within the timescales set out by the accepted clinical guidance for specific conditions.

The committee will be aware that the new clinical response model for ambulance services in Wales introduced in October 2015, prioritises calls according to a patient's relative clinical need to ensure those with the greatest need for an immediate response, in immediately-life threatening situations, are prioritised to receive the fastest response in order to maximise their chance of survival. The model was devised by leading clinicians and places a greater focus not only on the timeliness of the response, but also on the quality of care people receive.

When someone suffers a stroke, the quicker they arrive at a specialist stroke unit, the quicker they will receive the specialist treatment they need. This is why the Welsh Ambulance Service aims to respond to patients with new onset stroke as quickly as possible by dispatching a suitable emergency ambulance vehicle under blue light driving conditions which is capable of transporting them immediately to a specialist stroke team to begin the treatment they require. The Welsh Ambulance Service has put in place strong clinical guidance that must be followed for all suspected stroke patients. This ensures that actual and potential stroke patients are transferred to the appropriate settings within the clinically agreed guidelines.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

[Gohebiaeth.Vaughan.Gething@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Vaughan.Gething@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Vaughan.Gething@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Vaughan.Gething@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

It is important to consider that the cause and clinical severity of conditions can vary and will require call handlers to assess a patient's condition and circumstances and categorise the call accordingly. As such, the criteria for the categorisation of calls will not always be rigidly applied unless the patient's clinical condition and individual circumstances support this. For example, heart attacks and strokes may be categorised within the Red or the Amber category according to their relative clinical severity.

Following publication of the clinically-led review of the Welsh ambulance service Amber response category, in November 2018, the Amber Review Implementation Programme (ARIP) team has been working in consultation with Community Health Councils, the Stroke Association and its patients groups, and NHS Wales partners to develop new measures that give greater context to ambulance response times to people who have a stroke.

The Stroke Association has agreed to become a 'publishing partner' and to support the design of time-based measures for stroke which I expect to be published in early 2020.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V' and a long, sweeping tail.

**Vaughan Gething AC/AM**

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Health and Social Services