



## Ambulance Radio Programme

NHS Ambulance Radio Programme  
Equinox North  
Great Park Road  
Almondsbury  
Bristol  
BS32 4QL

Dame Meg Hillier MP  
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 9NA

Sent via email to: [pubaccom@parliament.uk](mailto:pubaccom@parliament.uk)

9<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Dear Dame Meg,

### **Inquiry Into Emergency Services Network**

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee on the 26<sup>th</sup> April on the inquiry into the Emergency Services Network (ESN). At the Committee session, I committed to write to you with the detail on transitional costs that have been accrued to date for the NHS Ambulance Services (Questions 27-29).

The response provided covers the NHS Ambulance Services in England as the Scottish and Welsh Ambulance Services are funded via the respective devolved Governments. Delivery of ESN for the NHS Ambulance Services is managed via the NHS Ambulance Radio Programme (ARP), whom are directly funded via the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

As part of the ESN delivery ARP agreed a scope of funding with DHSC to mirror the services provided under the existing Airwave contracts – this includes provision of control room services, vehicle hardware, handheld terminals and mobilisation software. Despite the continued delays with ESN, ARP has been able to continue with the procurement and delivery of these services. We have been able to proceed due to the strategy of specifying connectivity to both 4G/LTE and Tetra networks as required by both ESN and Airwave respectively. In the absence of ESN, we are utilising standard commercial 4G services for data provision. This is alongside Airwave which provides the critical voice communications services that are required by the emergency services.

This approach has enabled us to continue working alongside the NHS Ambulance Trusts in delivering a portfolio of products whilst agnostic of the network connection. Therefore, ESN transitional costs directly accrued by NHS Ambulance Trusts are currently minimal. Ambulance Trusts have also been completing work alongside the other emergency services with regards coverage assurance. Work completed supports both ESN delivery and our use of EE 4G services as a commercial bearer and thus we have not assessed as a transitional cost in this instance.

However, ARP has itself accrued ESN transitional costs with regards ESN delays – these are broken down into infrastructure changes/redesign to incorporate commercial 4G services, amendments to procurements (delivery date changes), procurement award delays (ESN date uncertainty) and continued support to existing hardware. In total these costs are circa £9.5 million, noting staff costs have been excluded as they are utilised supporting current ARP delivery.

The largest ongoing cost for ARP and DHSC remains the core contribution towards ESN and the costs of the Airwave Network thus effectively paying double.

We are fortunate in having a clear mandate and strategy supported by both DHSC and the NHS Ambulance Trusts that has enabled us to continue to deliver products that will be able to utilise ESN in the future, which we hope will help minimise the financial impacts of the ongoing delays. We have also worked with the ESN team to ensure both our infrastructure design and product specifications remain aligned with the core ESN requirements.

Looking forward we are currently unable to consider future transitional costs as we need to work with the Home Office ESN team with regards realistic timelines. We anticipate being able to start modelling these towards the latter part of 2023 when the revised timelines are provided by the ESN team alongside an updated Programme Business Case.

We remain fully committed to working with colleagues towards the delivery of ESN and welcome the collaborative and transparent approach being taken by the both the ESN Programme SRO and ESN Programme Director, which we believe will support successful delivery of ESN to the emergency services.

Yours sincerely



Chris Lucas  
**Senior User**  
**NHS Ambulance Radio Programme**