

## Cycling UK's Freedom of Information requests to NHS Ambulance Trusts in Great Britain

- On 17 November 2020, Cycling UK sent Freedom of Information (Fol) requests to all ten Ambulance Service NHS Trusts in England, plus the services in Wales and Scotland.
- We asked each Trust the same four questions (see [below](#)).

### Response rate:

- To date, ten of the twelve Trusts have responded (83%).
- Of these, eight Trusts answered some or all of our questions (East of England, East Midlands, London, North East, South Western, South Central, Yorkshire and Wales).
- Two Trusts (West Midlands and Scotland) said they did not hold the information we requested, although West Midlands referred us to a relevant public statement (see [below](#)).
- Two responses are pending (South East Coast and North West, both of whom acknowledged our request but asked for more time to respond).

### The responses:

**The majority (seven) of the eight trusts who responded to all or some of our questions did not report any issues with active travel schemes being implemented by their local authority without consultation. None of these seven Trusts:**

- Named or identified any new cycle lanes, low traffic neighbourhoods or other measures to restrict motor vehicle access that had been implemented without any consultation with them;
- Identified concerns about delays to ambulance drivers or emergency response times for any active travel schemes implemented without prior consultation with them;
- Identified concerns that they had raised with the highway authority and which the authority had subsequently failed to discuss further with them or address in some way.

Specifically,

#### East Midlands said:

“We have not had any issues reported to us by any of our staff members relating to segregated cycle lanes or Low Traffic Neighbourhood Schemes across our area of operations.”

#### London said:

“We are not aware of any active travel scheme that has been implemented without any consultation or notification to the Trust.”

#### South Central said:

“Ambulances can claim exemptions from road traffic regulations and therefore can utilise bus lanes and appropriate routes the public cannot. We have not had any issues raised to by staff where any active travel scheme has delayed a response to patients”.

#### South Western said:

“We sent your Freedom of Information Request to our County and Deputy County Commanders for each of the counties our Trust covers. We have not received any replies of concerns in

relation to cycle lanes, low traffic neighbourhoods, or any other measures to restrict motor vehicle access.”

Yorkshire said:

“The Trust is aware of new cycle lanes and LTNs [Low Traffic Neighbourhoods] which are being rolled out in Leeds; however the Trust does not hold information on those that have been implemented within the Trust’s area without any consultation with the Trust.”

They added: “If a scheme had been implemented without the Trust’s knowledge it is of course possible that we may not be aware of it, particularly at a senior management level.”

**Three Trusts detailed their experience of working effectively with their local authorities over the type of schemes we listed, and one referred us to a relevant public statement:**

East Midlands

“We continue to work closely with all the councils in the area we serve, including on road safety initiatives and changes to road layouts.”

London (LAS):

“LAS staff work closely with the boroughs' and TfL's traffic officers to ensure the design of proposed schemes better reflect our operational needs, and also works with them to monitor, discuss and adapt schemes after implementation to improve traffic flow and emergency service access.”

North East

“We work closely with council planning teams to understand the potential impact of road closures and layout changes on our ability to respond to patients and, where issues are raised by our operational management, we feed those back into the teams concerned.

“We also have internal processes to allow operational crews to raise any concerns. The Trust does not currently have any recorded incidents in relation to new cycle lanes or road layouts. “

West Midlands

West Midlands, one of the two Trusts who told us they did not hold the information we requested, referred us to a [release](#) issued by them on 16 November 2020. This stated that:

“The Trust was informed of the introduction of traffic management measures in the Kings Heath area by Birmingham City Council in September.

“The information about these measures was disseminated to ambulance staff working in the local area.

“To date, there have been no detrimental issues reported by staff in relation to responding to 999 calls in the Kings Heath area. We are confident that if the service did encounter any issues that we would work with the Council to resolve this.”

**Only one of the eight Trusts who responded to all or some of our questions identified a scheme in one of its local areas about which it had raised concerns:**

- East of England Ambulance Service Trust said in answer to Q1c (on “other measures to restrict motor vehicle access”: “Cambridge and Peterborough:

Barrier controlled access to pedestrian areas. green spaces across Cambridge. All other Trust areas – none aware of”.

- In Q2, the Trust added: “Cambridge and Peterborough - EEAST requested key safe access to all the barriers that were put in place. Key safe / key pad access was not provided. Keys were sent to Cambridge ambulance station which would not be sufficient for all EEAST fleet to access these areas.”
- We have asked the Trust if this problem has been resolved and are awaiting their response.
- Otherwise, the Trust answered “none aware of” to our questions about new cycle lanes and low traffic neighbourhoods implemented without consultation with them.

**Four Trusts explicitly said they are supportive in principle of active travel schemes to enable more people to walk and cycle:**

**East Midlands:**

David Williams, Deputy Director for Operations at East Midlands Ambulance Service said:

“We welcome the introduction of cycle lanes because they are there to help keep cyclists safe and therefore help prevent road traffic collisions.”

**London Ambulance Service (LAS):**

“LAS is supportive of the boroughs’ and TfL’s efforts to improve air quality, improve road safety, tackle traffic congestion and promote more active travel.” (Extract from a longer answer).

**South Central:**

“The trust is very supportive of these schemes to ensure we reduce the carbon emissions and promote the public health and well being”

**Yorkshire:**

“The Trust supports active travel schemes and encourage its staff to travel to work in alternative ways.”

Note: The above responses were made in response to Q3, except for East Midlands’ who combined its responses to all our questions in one general statement. East of England and Wales said the information sought was an opinion and therefore fell outside the scope of the FoI Act; North East said they did not hold the information.

**No Trust who answered all or some of our questions expressed support for the withdrawal of funding for active travel measures due to concerns that they might delay ambulance drivers or add to emergency response times.**

**London said:**

“No, the Trust does not support withdrawing funding for active travel measures. However, the Trust recognises that changes to road layouts, traffic management schemes, and road closures all have the potential to impede our response to the most critically ill patients and could delay life-saving treatments or their conveyance to the nearest emergency department. For this reason, the Trust carries this risk on its Risk Register. The Trust also engages extensively with the boroughs and TfL to ensure changes and traffic schemes (to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and road safety, and promote active travel) reflect our operational needs as an emergency service.”

South Central said:

“We have no comment to make on this as there is no evidence of delays to patients”.

Note: the above responses were made to our Q4. North East said they did not hold the information; both East of England and Wales said the question sought was an opinion so fell outside the scope of the FoI Act; Yorkshire said they had not been informed of this information; East Midlands combined their answers, and did not specifically answer this question (see above).

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### Our Freedom of Information questions:

Since Covid-19 restrictions were first imposed in March 2020, highway authorities have been encouraged to implement active travel schemes to enable more people to walk or cycle, including temporary cycle lanes and restrictions on through traffic in residential areas to create low traffic neighbourhoods.

1. For the period from March to November 2020, for the following active travel schemes, can you name and identify any which have been implemented within the Trust’s area without any consultation with the Trust:
  - a. New cycle lanes
  - b. Low traffic neighbourhoods
  - c. Other measures to restrict motor vehicle access?
2. Further to question 1, for any active travel scheme implemented without prior consultation with the Trust, can you identify any where the Trust:
  - a. Had concerns that the scheme might delay ambulance drivers or add to emergency response times
  - b. Raised those concerns with the relevant highway authority
  - c. Raised those concerns with the relevant highway authority, and the highway authority subsequently failed to engage with the Trust in further discussions regarding the scheme
  - d. Raised those concerns with the relevant highway authority, with the scheme still proceeding without the Trust’s concerns being addressed in some way?
3. Is the Trust supportive in principle of active travel schemes to enable more people to walk and cycle?
4. Does the Trust support the withdrawal of funding for active travel measures due to concerns that they might delay ambulance drivers or add to emergency response times, and if so, can the Trust provide any evidence to support such concerns?

27 January 2021