



Transport Handover Policy and Procedure

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1. Introduction:

All Wales Ambulance Services Limited cares for a diverse range of patients, both in general non-emergency runs, emergency transfers between aircraft and hospital (or visa versa) and medical event work, often in unique and demanding circumstances. This procedure aims to capture the entire patient journey from the point that an ambulance arrives on site to the point of discharge from AWAS care. The actions we take to provide care are crucial in providing patients with a timely and appropriate experience. In order to provide fluid care we need to maintain close working relationships with partner agencies and care givers.

2. Scope

This policy provides guidance to staff in relation to the most appropriate treatment, transfer and referral of patients. It does not seek to provide detailed guidance, but does guide staff to the relevant detailed guidance/policy where required.

This policy applies to all patient groups. Where required, advice/guidance regarding specific patient groups, such as children or vulnerable adults, will be distinctly identified.

3. Objectives

3.1 To ensure that staff are appropriately advised of the action to be taken on site.

3.2 To improve communication between AWAS staff and professional colleagues.

3.3 To help ensure that all patients who are conveyed by AWAS Transport receive optimum care during their journey based upon their clinical condition, safeguarding the interests of both patient and staff.

3.4 To help ensure that all patients transferred by AWAS, where it is the decision of AWAS, are offered conveyance to a destination most suited to their clinical needs.

3.5 To ensure that the best use of Alternative Care Pathways, are considered at medical centres controlled by AWAS and should the Patient injured or their condition worsens during the transport by one of the Company's vehicles.

3.6 To minimise risks that can occur whilst on scene.

3.7 To ensure that adequate support is available for staff to call upon when working in vulnerable situations.

3.8 To ensure that staff are appropriately informed of the action to be taken on scene.

3.9 To provide clarity for both AWAS and hospital staff of their role in the handover of a patient, ensuring the provision of seamless patient care.

3.10 To ensure the patient is handed over in a safe and timely manner within the 15 minute patient handover to available time standard.

3.11 To help ensure that patients who are not conveyed for any reason are offered appropriate care and advice based upon their clinical needs, safeguarding the interests of both patient and staff.

3.12 To identify when responsibility for the patient transfers from AWAAS to another responsible person or agency.

3.13 To ensure that staff are appropriately informed in the recognition of life extinct procedure and the management of deceased patients.

4. Responsibilities:

4.1 NAPAS (National Association of Private Ambulance Services):

NAPAS provides assurance to the Trust Board on clinical, corporate, information governance and compliance matters ensuring high quality care to patients. NAPAS also seeks assurance from within the Company that patient safety was being managed effectively and that effective processes are in place to manage and monitor hygiene/ infection control and safeguarding.

4.2 Medical Officer:

The Medical Officer oversees the arrangements within the Company for managing clinical safety and quality. This will include clinical governance and clinical risk, as well as reviewing evidence and outcomes and developing or improving clinical practice. The Clinical Audit provides evidence of the standard and quality of care provided to patients.

The Medical Director also has delegated responsibility for clinical governance and the strategic development and implementation of the treatment and conveyance, (or discharge) of patients to a requisite care facility. The Medical Director will take the lead on aspects relating to patient safety. (This paragraph refers mainly to medical event cover but could also apply to other areas).

Audit evidence is used for external reporting against Clinical Performance Indicators. The Company, being based in Wales, does not have the right to register with the CQC (Care Quality Commission) but will follow CQC guidelines and endeavour to reach and exceed these quality targets at all times.

4.3 Chief Executive:

The Chief Executive, as the Accountable Officer, has overall accountability for having a robust risk management system in place and an effective system of internal control, which is embedded within the Company. The Chief Executive has delegated day to day responsibility for all aspects of risk management to nominated Executive Directors for their respective areas in line with the Risk Management Policy and Strategy.

4.4 Operations Manager:

The Operations Manager/s has/have delegated responsibility for managing Logistical Control Services.

4.5 Clinical / Operational Staff:

Operational Staff are responsible for the day to day delivery of the treatment and conveyance, (or discharge) of patients to an appropriate care facility. This includes (but is not limited to) Duty Station Officers (DSOs), Team Leaders, Paramedics, Emergency Medical Technicians, Patient Transport Service (PTS) and Control Services staff.

Clinical / Operational Staff responsibilities are fully set out within their job descriptions.

The principle responsibilities of Clinical/ Operational Staff are:

- ✚ Always work within AWAS Company policies and procedures.
- ✚ Recognise and work within the limits of their professional competence by undertaking duties and responsibilities which they are able to perform in a safe and skilled manner.
- ✚ Provide clinical leadership by assuming primacy of care for a patient (or task) once it has been established that they have a higher level of competency than other staff on scene.
- ✚ Handover the management of a patient (or task) to a more senior clinician in attendance, if skills are required beyond their scope of practice.
- ✚ Keep clear, accurate and up to date patient records which report the relevant clinical findings, decisions made, and all treatment administered to the patient.
- ✚ Maintain and improve their professional knowledge, skills and competence through ongoing professional development.
- ✚ Observe the professional principles of integrity, honesty and patient confidentiality.
- ✚ Refrain from knowingly participating in any act or deed that could be deemed unethical.
- ✚ Do nothing to undermine public confidence in the Company.
- ✚ Maintain and promote the professional standing of AWAS in the wider health care setting and with other emergency services and agencies.

Clinical/ Operational staff should undertake their assessment and management of patients in line with the Joint Royal Colleges Ambulance Liaison Committee National Clinical Guidelines, their level of training and if applicable their Regulatory Body's code of professional conduct.

4.10 All Staff:

It is the responsibility of **all staff** to identify risks and to report these to the appropriate manager, as detailed in HS011 (Incident Reporting Procedure). Employees also have a responsibility to cooperate with managers and to contribute to the process of identifying and reducing risks.

5. Definitions:

5.1 Conveyance:

- ✚ The definition of „conveyance“ for the purposes of this policy is based upon the following:
- ✚ „The transfer of patients, medical and clinical personnel, equipment and associated records, as appropriate including from one healthcare facility to another as well as the initial journey from the scene.“

*NHS Litigation Authority
Risk Management Standards for Ambulance Trusts 2012-13*

5.2 Patient Groups

For the purpose of this document patients are defined in the following groups:

Patient Group	Definition *	Conveyance requirements (Transfer, medical/clinical personnel, equipment, associated records)
Adults	Age 18 and over.	
Paediatric Patients	Age under 18	There are a number of facilities in Wales that do not accept patients under the age of 16. The Operations desk has up to date details of which Emergency Departments do not accept paediatric patients. Specific guidance exists for non-conveyed paediatric patients under 5 years of age.
Patients conveyed direct to a Primary Angioplasty facility	This patient group is defined as having ECG evidence indicative of an acute myocardial infarction.	This patient group is conveyed direct to facility, that if required, can perform primary angioplasty.
Major Trauma.	These patients are defined by triggering the Major Trauma Decision Triage Tool.	This patient group are patients conveyed directly to a Major Trauma Centre.
Hyper Acute Stoke.	Are defined by the Medical Director's Bulletins relating to Stroke.	This patient group are patients conveyed direct to a Hyper Acute Stoke Unit.
Obstetrics.	This group of patients is defined by JRCALC obstetrics sections.	This patient group are patients conveyed direct to obstetrics facility. This is set out in JRCALC.
Minor Injury Unit & Walk in Centres.	This patient group are patients who are conveyed to Minor Injury Unit & Walk in Centres.	Section 16 The pathways for these units and the patients they accept are listed on The Pulse on the complex home page
Referred to another Health care professional	This patient group are patients who are not conveyed to a medical facility but referred to another healthcare professional for onward assessment, treatment and care.	Section 16
<p><i>*It should be noted that these definitions are for guidance in relation to this policy and definitions may vary for other policies and procedure.</i></p>		

6. Documentation and Patient's medication(s)

All documentation to be completed for each episode of patient care is covered in detail in the staff induction process.

This staff session details the process for documenting all treatment provided, what documentation must be left with the patient, or accompany them when being conveyed to a treatment centre etc. in various circumstances.

Wherever possible all relevant patient-held documentation must be taken with the patient to the hospital/treatment centre. This may include documents such as Maternity Records / "Red Books" / Child Health Records/Condition specific care plans etc... (this is not an exhaustive list).

Wherever possible all patient medications must be conveyed with the patient using the property bags/pharmacy bags supplied for this purpose. If for any reason you are unable to take the medications, then up to date prescription lists should be obtained from the patient if possible.

The reason for taking documentation and medications with the patient is that care plans and medication plans can be assessed by the doctors and pharmacists in order to check that the correct treatment and/or drug regimen(s) are being followed by the patient.

7. Guidelines:

7.1 Local Guidelines:

Consent for examination and treatment must be gained for any patient treated by a member of AWAS staff. Detailed guidance on consent to examination and treatment, and also on refusal to examination, treatment or transport is dealt with in staff induction for Consent to Examination or Treatment.

8. Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment Regimes:

The process of assessment, diagnosis and treatment regimens should be carried out according to the JRCALC guidance, clinical training and professional scope of practice. Sections 9 to 16 set out the guidelines and specific actions to be taken when conveying a patient.

The type of information that needs to be given to the patient by the ambulance clinician will vary depending on circumstances and urgency, and should be based on the description and method of treatment, transport and on-going care. The Clinician should inform the patient of possible complications and side-effects and treatment options.

9. Crew Actions En-route and At Scene:

9.1 Initial Actions on Scene:

On arrival at the call location, the time should be recorded on the Patient Report Form (PRF). The time of arrival at the patient must also be recorded when completing the PRF.

Ambulance staff arriving at the location given via the Operations desk, but unable to locate the patient must contact Operations with this information and commence an "area search". During the area search, Operations Manager/s will attempt to make contact with the Patient to confirm the location. AWAS has a responsibility to take all reasonable steps to locate the patient. If, despite all efforts, the patient is not found, Operations Managers will inform the Client (Trust, LHB, Health Board etc) and pass along a record of attempts to contact the origin number and the resulting outcome. Ambulance staff must record "area search no trace" on the PRF or Transport form.

When attending an emergency call, the minimum equipment to be taken to scene includes the oxygen bag and primary response bag (including AED). Additional items such as collars, suction, paramedic bag etc. should be taken based on a dynamic assessment of the call details and primary survey on scene.

If a patient is being transferred from a place of care and the patient is not ready the following should be noted:

If the delay is expected to exceed 5 minutes then the Operations Manager/s must be informed immediately and the crew should remain in contact with Operations. The final decision on whether ambulance staff should be re-deployed is the responsibility of the Operations Manager. Effective liaison between ambulance staff and Operations Manager is essential.

9.2 Forced Entry by Ambulance Staff:

In the instance of ambulance staff being unable to gain access to a property they should contact Operations to confirm the address and that all relevant information has been received. If it is obvious that there is somebody in the premises that requires urgent assistance then the crew need not wait for further permission from Operations desk before effecting forced entry to the location.

Examples would be where the crew can see the patient lying unresponsive on the floor with signs of blood loss evident, or a patient lying unresponsive.

9.3 Action to be taken by Operations Manager:

Before authorising a crew to make a forced entry into a private property, the Operations Manager/s should carry out the following checks:

- ✚ Check all electronic information and confirm that the crew have identified the correct address.
- ✚ Ring the telephone number provided for that address or the caller/patient.
- ✚ Contact the police and request assistance, advising a possible “collapse behind locked doors”.
- ✚ Ask the crew to establish from neighbours, relevant information about the occupant and the location of spare keys to the property if known.
- ✚ Once Operations are satisfied that there is likely to be a person in the premises that requires urgent medical help, permission may be granted to the crew to make a forced entry, if police are not in attendance.
- ✚ The patient should be seen or heard to be in distress before an entry is forced and their consent should be sought where possible.

Staff should carry out a dynamic risk assessment, balancing the need for a fast entry, with their safety. Following this assessment, an entry with the minimum amount of damage and minimum personal risk may be attempted.

In the instance of a forced entry it is critical that the Operations Manager is made aware as soon as possible. Operations Manager/s staff will advise the police and unless the patient’s condition is deteriorating quickly, the crew should remain on scene until arrival of the police.

Where the patient’s condition is time critical, requires immediate removal and it is cleared that AWAS staff are to transport to hospital on behalf of WAST, an attempt should be made to secure the premises in the best way possible and to leave it looking visibly secure.

Depending on the circumstances it may be appropriate to ask a responsible person to look after the premises until the police arrive.

Any forced entry in to a property should be documented on the PRF including the reasons for doing so and the efforts made to secure the property before departure.

9.4 Safety on Scene & Staff Welfare:

When on scene it is paramount that the priority of ambulance is to protect themselves, their colleagues, the patient and any other persons on scene. Once AWAS ambulance staff arrive at an incident, there may be instances where further Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) may be required. If the scene is for any reason considered unsafe, staff should initially withdraw and immediately inform Operations Manager (or Duty Officer whilst deployed on medical support).

Close liaison must be maintained at all times with other emergency services and, where appropriate, the senior safety officer or other responsible person on scene.

If, on arrival at scene, staff discover that the call falls within the remit of the Road Traffic Act they should inform Operations desk as soon as possible and where injury has occurred, request the attendance of police. If the police have not arrived before conveying the patient, the crew should inform Operations of this fact and the hospital to which they are conveying the patient.

Although the personal safety of the ambulance crew is a priority, the safety of patients and others at scene remains paramount. This may, for example, include the protection of the patient during a difficult extrication where cutting equipment is in use. Ambulance staff must inform the patient of the intended actions to be taken which may affect the patient, the situation or the outcome in any way.

All ambulance staff must proceed with caution when confronted with potentially violent situations and must place their own safety first. If faced with threatening behaviour, ambulance staff should make all efforts to diffuse the situation remaining calm, respectful and polite at all times.

If unsuccessful and the situation persists or escalates, staff should withdraw and request police assistance via Operations Desk.

If ambulance staff subsequently feel they need further support or assistance once the incident is complete, they should contact Operations, who will contact the Police authority in the area.

9.5 Patient Communication and Interaction:

Due to the diverse population that AWAS serves, it is probable that ambulance staff will come into contact with patients where there are communication difficulties. These difficulties may cause the patient further distress and anxiety, thus limiting patient assessment.

AWAS staff are constantly in contact with patients from different cultures and religions. Staff must treat all patients equally, affording them courtesy, respect and politeness at all times. Under no circumstances should a patient be treated less favourably than another on any grounds.

As representatives of AWAS, ambulance services limited should ensure that they conduct themselves in a manner that reflects both their own and the Company's professional standing. A professional approach includes:

-  Wearing AWAS uniform in accordance with the Dress Code for Uniformed Staff
-  Body language that imparts sympathy and understanding,
-  Interpersonal and clinical skills that allow ambulance staff to assess each patient in a calm, confident and methodical manner

Staff should be aware that their actions on scene may be witnessed by third parties who may feel that an action, inaction or statement is inappropriate for the circumstances. Staff should make every effort to explain their actions to those who have reasonable cause or grounds to request such information.

A patient's behaviour may at times appear unreasonable but, despite this, staff should not be drawn into arguments. Any problems should be documented on the PRF and referred to an Operations manager, if required.

Disagreements between AWAS staff or with other Health Care Professionals must never take place in public places or in view or hearing of the patient or general public.

9.6 Patient Welfare:

Ambulance staff have a responsibility to record on the PRF and report to the hospital staff during handover, any concerns they may have about the patients' home environment, e.g., cold, damp, unsanitary conditions, no food provisions or a dangerous appliance or structure.

When the patient is being conveyed to a home address which is found to be unhealthy or unsafe it should be reported to Operations Manager or Duty Officer as soon as possible before leaving the premises. A consensus should be reached between clinical staff on scene and OM/DO on what appropriate action to take, e.g., locally agreed access pathways to social services and where cases of abuse or vulnerability are suspected.

Ambulance staff should always check the ambulance for patient property before leaving the receiving unit.

The Operations Department will host enquiries relating to patient property. Where information is not documented on the PRF, the matter will be referred to the relevant crew and information requested in full. Operations managers should be aware of the requirement to advise an enquirer of their right to make a formal complaint and/or a compensatory claim. In this event the matter should be referred to the appropriate department.

If it is brought to the attention of ambulance staff that a patient in need of conveying has sole responsibility for an animal, reasonable measures should be taken to ensure that the animal is subsequently cared for.

If the patient is in a public place when receiving emergency care and has an animal with them, ambulance staff should ascertain whether there is an appropriate person on scene to take short term responsibility of the animal. If not Operations should be informed and asked to contact the police. As an absolute last resort and at the discretion of staff the animal may be conveyed with the patient. Guide dogs must be conveyed as a matter of course and dogs should be placed in the front of the ambulance on passenger-side floor. A lead must be securely attached to the dog and an anchor point, to prevent the animal moving during transport.

Used equipment, soiled dressings and/ or sharps should NOT be left on scene. If waste is generated at any time whilst attending a patient, it must be disposed of according to service policy and in accordance with the AWAS Infection Prevention and Control Policy.

All patient medication must accompany the patient to their destination. Prescription lists should not routinely be taken in place of actual medicines. Patient details must be clearly written on the front of the bag and documented on the PRF before being handed to the receiving hospital staff.

In the case of a patient being transported to hospital from a nursing home, medicines should be requested from the Registered Nurse on duty. If it is not possible to take all the medicines, a copy of an up-to-date prescription list should be requested.

9.7 Patient Protection:

Everyone has a responsibility to report a suspicion of criminal offence. Ambulance staff also, in common with other NHS staff, have a duty of confidentiality towards their patients. These priorities need to be balanced to ensure that appropriate medical care is provided for all patients whilst alerting police to a crime or crime scene.

If ambulance staff believe or suspect that their patient is involved in a crime they must continue to treat that patient and, if necessary, convey to hospital. Staff must immediately inform the Operations Manager, or advise hospital staff, to inform the police of their suspicions or evidence. In any event, Operations must always be informed so that the call log can be updated to reflect this information.

Where there are unusual or suspicious circumstances, staff should take reasonable precautions to preserve the potential crime scene, and await, if appropriate, the arrival of the police.

Staff are responsible for reporting all instances of abuse which they are made aware of. In the case of a child any suspicion of abuse must be reported. Vulnerable adults, notably the elderly and disabled may also be subject to abuse. The appropriate forms must be completed and the incident reported.

If staff suspect a child is being abused, Suspected Cases of Child Abuse Procedure must be implemented. Additional guidance is available in the JRCALC National Clinical Guidelines.

If staff suspect an adult is being abused, Suspected Abuse of Vulnerable Adults Procedure must be implemented. Additional guidance is available in the JRCALC National Clinical Guidelines.

The situation must be documented on the PRF and the appropriate Child Protection Report Form or Protection for Vulnerable Adult Form must be completed. The receiving Emergency Department Nurse/Doctor must be notified at hand over of the completion of a referral form and the circumstances surrounding the patient. The receiving clinician's name and designation must be recorded on the PRF.

If the victim of suspected abuse is the patient and they are not conveyed, or the victim is not the patient at the location, ambulance staff must again inform Operations so that they are made aware of the situation and pass this information to the appropriate authority.

Injuries or illness related to the workplace are covered by specific Health and Safety legislation. This is normally reported to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) under RIDDOR guidance. However ambulance attendance to a workplace for life changing, life threatening or fatal accidents should be reported to the police as soon as possible via Operations Manager/s. The police may need to instigate criminal investigation and/or notify HSE investigators. This section also applies to members of the public or non-employees in a workplace setting. The following are examples of workplace incidents that should be reported to the police at the time of the accident:

- ✚ Fatal accidents
- ✚ Amputation and/or multiple trauma
- ✚ Loss of sight or serious eye injury
- ✚ Injury resulting from an electric shock or electrical burn leading to unconsciousness, or requiring resuscitation or admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours; serious illness and/or unconsciousness caused by asphyxia or exposure to harmful toxin, chemical, biological or radiological substance. Any other injury deemed to be serious and necessitating prolonged hospital care/intervention.

There are frequent requests for observers to accompany ambulance crews on Emergency or Patient Transport Service (PTS) vehicles. Approval for observers on either Emergency or PTS vehicles can only be authorised by the Operations Manager/s.

- ✚ When such arrangements have been approved, the observer, regardless of their status, qualifications and training must not become involved in the care and treatment of patients unless specifically requested to do so in an emergency by ambulance staff
- ✚ Observers should be clearly identified by wearing an LAS hi-visibility jacket marked "Observer".

10. Appropriate Clinical Care of Patients:

All staff must act within their own professional boundaries recognising when to, assume responsibility from a lower qualified colleague and when to hand over responsibility to another senior professional colleague. The highest clinical grade on scene takes overall responsibility for patient care. This however can be superseded by the arrival of further assistance i.e. a paramedic arriving after an Emergency Medical Technician crew or a pre-hospital physician arriving to assist a paramedic. Careful consideration must be taken when delegating clinical responsibility to a lesser qualified colleague – clinical primacy in the pre-hospital phase of care is retained regardless of delegation. This clinical primacy is maintained until hospital handover, appropriate referral, leaving the patient in the care of a responsible person (refer to Appendix 1) or valid refusal of assistance. If multiple members of staff are on scene of the same clinical grade – the first person engaging the patient in clinical care assumes responsibility.

Staff must ensure that all clinical assessments are undertaken in accordance with their training. These are detailed in the current JRCALC Clinical Practice Guidelines, as well as within the IHCD Basic and Paramedic Training manuals. Copies of these reference sources are provided on a personal issue basis to staff in accordance with their respective grade. Consequently, staff with queries on any aspect of this material, are encouraged to seek assistance from their Training Officer or Clinical Tutor.

The AWAS Patient Report Form specifies the minimum level of observations to be performed on each patient. Additional observations and comments can be added in the notes box.

Early consideration should be given to further specialist resources required at scene. Requests should be made, where appropriate, for County Ambulance Services (EMS).

The destination of the patient must be determined based upon clinical need (If being transported by AWAS). Having addressed all matters of initial scene safety, attending staff must make a full assessment of the patient before determining where the patient will be transported to. This will comprise of a primary survey, along with due consideration to the mechanism of injury where indicated. However, it is recognised that the detection of any time critical problems may require the assessment to be aborted, enabling the crew to commence rapid transportation with appropriate treatment en-route. Equally, situations involving patient entrapments or delays in removal from scene may require the summoning of additional clinical resources and/or other emergency services to the incident. Subsequent management of the patient will include the continual reassessment and correction of any primary survey problems, together with a comprehensive secondary survey where circumstances permit.

The most senior clinician on scene will consider both the clinical needs of the patient and the facilities available at local hospitals, in deciding the most appropriate patient destination. This decision should take into account the wishes of the patient (or a relative) wherever possible. Patients receiving on-going investigation or treatment for a specific condition may be conveyed to the hospital where their treatment is provided, on the provision that a more serious or life-threatening condition does not take precedence. In all such cases, staff must ensure that the best interests of the patient are assured and no significant clinical risk arises. The PRF should be completed in accordance with staff training.

Advice can be obtained from the Operations Desk in determining the most appropriate patient destination.

Patients attended as the result of emergency calls may be conveyed to the nearest appropriate Emergency Department. However there are exceptions to this:

- ✚ The nearest/local Emergency Department does not receive a certain category of patient, i.e. paediatrics or trauma. These patients must be conveyed to the next appropriate Emergency Department.
- ✚ The condition of the patient suggests that rapid access to specialist treatment will require that they be directly conveyed to a hospital providing that speciality, i.e. Major Trauma Centre, Hyper Acute Stroke Unit or Heart Attack Centre.
- ✚ Maternity patients should be managed according to current JRCALC guidance and where appropriate, local arrangements.
- ✚ Patients whose condition justifies the use of an alternative referral pathway, which could include conveyance to a minor injuries unit, Urgent Care Centre, Walk in Centre or non-conveyance and referral to a pathway available in the community (for example arranging for a district nurse or other primary healthcare practitioner to visit).

A Doctor or other Health Care Professional (HCP) with responsibility for the patient may make a request for the patient to be taken to a designated destination other than the nearest Emergency Department. Staff should comply with the request if clinically appropriate and safe and not override that request unless first discussed with the HCP.

In cases where a HCP has requested transport to a specific destination, but on assessment by AWAS staff it is determined that the patient requires transport to a specialist centre, the HCP should be contacted and advised (i.e. a GP assesses a patient experiencing chest pain, refers them to the nearest ED, but on LAS assessment a STEMI is diagnosed and the patient transported to a Heart Attack Centre).

10.1 Caring for Children:

A child is defined in the following section as a person under 18 years of age. This is defined from The Children Act 1989.

It is good practice for a parent/guardian to accompany a child to hospital and ambulance staff should make every effort to ensure that this happens. When this is not possible, either a teacher or other responsible adult can accompany the patient. If this is not possible the patient may travel unaccompanied with the ambulance staff. If the child is travelling unaccompanied the Operations Manager/s must be informed and document this on the PRF.

Staff must obtain as much information about the patient as possible including relevant medical history to ensure a full hand over on arrival at the hospital. Emphasis must be placed at clinical handover to the hospital clinician that the child is unaccompanied and any contact details of the parent or guardian should be handed over. This should be clearly documented with a name and signature on the PRF.

Before examining or treating a child ambulance staff must gain consent. Young people aged 16 and 17 are presumed to have the competence to give consent for themselves. Children under 16 years of age have the right to provide independent consent proportionate to their competence (although their parents will ideally be involved). In cases where children do not have the capacity to consent for themselves, parents or someone with parental responsibility must give consent on the child's behalf. If the situation is deemed life threatening and the parent/person with parental responsibility is not available the attending ambulance crew must act in the patient's best interest.

If a competent child consents to treatment, a parent cannot override that consent. Legally, if a competent child refuses treatment a parent/person with parental responsibility may override that decision.

If the removal of a patient to hospital will result in a child being left unsupervised, ambulance staff must either convey the child/children or contact Operations Manager/s to arrange for the police to attend and assume responsibility. This action should not delay the patient's conveyance to hospital. If the patient's condition is serious and children are to be left alone, then the urgency for the police attendance must be indicated.

There is no minimum age at which a child may be left unsupervised. Legally, no offence is committed until the child comes to harm, at which point the responsible adult or parent can be prosecuted for failing to ensure their safety. As a guide, the following points should be considered:

- ✚ If a child is under fifteen years, staff should make arrangements as per Appendix 1– Statement of Duties to Patients. Although the child is not a patient, the principles contained in that appendix hold for this type of situation.
- ✚ Children between fifteen and eighteen years may be temporarily left alone if staff are confident of the child's ability to care for themselves. If a child is left at home the receiving clinician must be notified at hand over and the occurrence documented on the PRF and the Operations log.

If an unrelated adult (for example a neighbour) offers to take responsibility for the child and the patient or person with parental responsibility is not able to approve that arrangement, then ambulance staff must inform Operations Desk to request police attendance.

11. Working with the Police:

This section details AWAS Procedure as agreed between the AWAS and the Police Service to cover the following areas:

- ✚ Appropriate transportation of persons to hospital
- ✚ Section 136 of the Mental Health Act
- ✚ Emergency treatment and transport of persons without capacity who withhold consent

It is recognised that working relationships between AWAS and the Police at the front line are generally extremely good. This section aims to formalise these working relationships and clarify roles and responsibilities.

Any action taken by AWAS and the Police must be:

- ✚ Proportionate
- ✚ Legal
- ✚ Accountable
- ✚ Necessary
- ✚ Based on best available information
- ✚ Actions must be in accordance with the Human Rights Act and other legislation, specifically the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and all other relevant statutory provisions and recognised codes of practice.

11.1 Appropriate transportation of patients:

In general the majority of persons requiring treatment following assessment by an ambulance crew will be taken to hospital by ambulance. However, there may be exceptional occasions when ambulance transport is not appropriate, i.e. if there is a risk of the person harming themselves, a member of the ambulance crew or any other person and/or the person is so violent or dangerous that the attendance of a police officer or officers in the ambulance will not adequately address the risk. In reaching this decision, which must be recorded, the ambulance crew should consider the following:

- ✚ The person's behaviour at the time
- ✚ Any relevant history
- ✚ Any risks presented to the person, AWAS crew or others

Where practicable, police officers and other professionals on scene, as well as the person and/or carers should be involved in this risk assessment.

If police are not already present, and the ambulance crew determine that such a risk exists, consideration will be given to asking for police to attend the scene. In these cases it will be the responsibility of a member of the ambulance crew to provide the police officer(s) with a briefing of the circumstances and the identified risk factors, and precisely what assistance is requested.

Where the person is under arrest and requires medical treatment at hospital he will normally be conveyed to hospital in an ambulance. At least one police officer will accompany the person in the ambulance at all times whilst he remains under arrest. In these cases the role of the police will be to prevent crime and/or a breach of the peace and to prevent the person's escape from lawful custody and police officers may use such force as is reasonable, necessary and proportionate to those ends.

Where it is agreed between the ambulance crew and the police officer(s) that, notwithstanding the person's need for medical treatment at hospital, it is necessary and proportionate by reason of the person's behaviour to convey the person to hospital in a police vehicle this course of action will be followed, with the following conditions:

- ✚ In all cases a member of the ambulance crew will accompany the person in the police vehicle in order to maintain constant observation.
- ✚ Equipment to undertake basic life support must be in the police vehicle with the ambulance clinician. As a minimum, this needs to include oxygen, bag-valve-mask and defibrillator.
- ✚ The ambulance will closely follow the police vehicle to the hospital/other destination.
- ✚ Where the person is under arrest and objects to being taken to hospital and where the ambulance crew advises that the requirement for medical treatment is not urgent the person may be taken directly to a designated police station in a police vehicle. If the person does not have mental capacity, the crew must act in the best interests of the patient.
- ✚ Where papers have been completed under sections 2, 3 or 4 of the Mental Health Act 1983 following an assessment on private premises, the patient will normally be conveyed by ambulance to the hospital named in the application. Where the Approved Social Worker/

Approved Mental Health Professional so requests one or more police officers may accompany the patient in the ambulance. In these cases the role of the police will be to ensure the transportation to hospital is effected, prevent crime and/or a breach of the peace and to prevent the patient's escape from lawful custody and police officers may use such force as is reasonable, necessary and proportionate to those ends.

Where papers have been completed under sections 2, 3 or 4 of the Mental Health Act (1983) following an assessment on private premises **and** the Approved Social Worker/ Approved Mental Health Professional so requests, and it is agreed between the ambulance crew and the police officer(s) that the person is so violent or dangerous that it is necessary and proportionate to convey the patient to hospital in a police vehicle this course of action will be followed, with the following conditions:

- ✚ In all cases a member of the ambulance crew will accompany the person in the police vehicle in order to maintain constant observation
- ✚ Equipment to undertake basic life support must be in the police vehicle with the ambulance clinician. As a minimum, this needs to include oxygen, bag-valve-mask and defibrillator.
- ✚ The ambulance will closely follow the police vehicle to the hospital/other destination.

Where the person is not under arrest nor detained under the Mental Health Act as above, a police vehicle cannot be used to transport the person. Consideration will be given by the ambulance crew and police as to whether the person is so violent or dangerous that it is proportionate and necessary for police to assist the ambulance crew either by a police officer(s) travelling in the ambulance or by a police vehicle accompanying the ambulance to hospital. In these cases the role of police will be to prevent crime and/or a breach of the peace and police officers may use such force as is reasonable, necessary and proportionate to those ends.

A police vehicle will not be used to carry out inter-hospital transfers.

Where it is necessary for a police officer to use force during the transportation of a person to hospital he will record all relevant matters in an Evidential Report Book and a member of the ambulance crew will endorse the report.

11.2 Section 136 of the Mental Health Act:

AWAS and the Police are committed to providing a safe, secure and supportive response to people undergoing a mental health crisis in a public place. It is recognised that such people may also have underlying medical conditions that require emergency hospital treatment. For this reason, it is considered appropriate wherever possible to convey by ambulance persons detained by a constable under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act. However, it is recognised that there will be occasions when it is not safe to transport in an ambulance, even with the assistance in the ambulance of a police officer or officers, and the person needs to be conveyed in a police vehicle supported by the crew of an AWAS ambulance.

Section 136 of the Mental Health Act states:

“If a Constable finds in a place to which the public have access a person who appears to him to be suffering from mental disorder and to be in immediate need of care or control, the Constable may, if he thinks it necessary to do so in the interests of that person or for the protection of other persons, remove that person to a place of safety...”

In every area within Wales, the police have agreed with mental health trusts a place of safety, which is not a police station. In some areas the agreed place of safety is a psychiatric reception unit; in others it is an Emergency Department.

Persons detained under Section 136 should, as a rule, be conveyed to a place of safety by ambulance, in recognition of:

-  Their human rights
-  Duty of care (both AWAS and the Police)
-  Respect for their dignity
-  Public perception

The guiding principle is that, if there is a requirement for medical treatment for a physical injury or condition this outweighs the need for assessment under the Mental Health Act.

If the ambulance crew decide that the person requires medical treatment at hospital (other than a psychiatric hospital), they will determine the destination hospital (usually the nearest Emergency Department) in accordance with AWAS procedures. The police officer(s) will retain custody of the person and accompany the person to hospital in the ambulance. They may use such force as is reasonable, necessary and proportionate to prevent crime and/or breach of the peace and to prevent escape from lawful custody.

Where the ambulance crew decide that medical treatment at hospital for a physical injury or condition is not required, the person will be taken by ambulance to the place of safety designated by the local section 136 protocol.

However, there may be occasions when ambulance transport is not appropriate, i.e. if there is a risk of the person harming themselves, a member of the ambulance crew or any other person and the person is so violent or dangerous that the attendance of a police officer or officers in the ambulance will not adequately address the risk. In reaching this decision, the ambulance crew should consider the following:

-  The person's behaviour at the time
-  Any relevant history
-  Any risks presented to the person, AWAS crew or others

Where practicable, police officers and other professionals on scene, as well as the person and/or carers should be involved in this risk assessment.

If it is agreed between the ambulance crew and the police officer(s) that it is necessary and proportionate by reason of the person's behaviour to convey the person to the designated place of safety in a police vehicle, this course of action will be followed, with the following conditions:

- ✚ In all cases a member of the ambulance crew will accompany the person in the police vehicle in order to maintain constant observation.
- ✚ Equipment to undertake basic life support must be in the police vehicle with the ambulance clinician. As a minimum, this needs to include oxygen, bag-valve-mask and defibrillator.
- ✚ The ambulance will closely follow the police vehicle to the hospital/ other destination.

The police officer(s) are responsible for a "legal" handover under the Mental Health Act, in accordance with the local protocol. The ambulance crew are responsible for providing a clinical handover to the staff at the hospital or other place of safety. It is not expected that the ambulance crew will remain at the place of safety once they have handed over the person's clinical care.

11.3 Use of Restraint:

No patient should be restrained in a prone position, due to the risk of positional asphyxia. Positional/restraint asphyxia is defined as occurring when "the position of the body interferes with respiration, resulting in asphyxia (suffocation)". Positional asphyxia can occur extremely rapidly when a patient is in a position that interferes with inspiration and/or expiration and cannot alter that position.

Owing to the risks of positional/restraint asphyxia, the prone position must not be used during transportation. If restrained, the patient must receive close and continuous monitoring. As a minimum, level of consciousness (AVPU, heart rate, end-tidal CO₂, effort of breathing, SpO₂, ECG and blood pressure must be monitored. If it is not possible to monitor any of the vital signs listed, the reason must be clearly documented on the PRF.

Where it is necessary for a police officer to use force during the transportation of a person to hospital he will record all relevant matters in an Evidential Report Book and a member of the ambulance crew will endorse the report.

11.4 Emergency Treatment of Patients Without Capacity who Withhold Consent to Treatment:

If an adult is not capable of making his/her own health care decisions, based on an assessment of his/her capacity, AWAS staff will have to consider intervention against their wishes under the terms of section 5 of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. These terms apply when a decision is made to act in the best interests of a patient who has been assessed as lacking capacity at that moment.

Where the Mental Capacity Act is to be invoked AWAS staff are aware that the reasons for its use are to be documented on the person's clinical record. AWAS staff will also have access to an assessment of capacity tool that will assist in making a decision whether to invoke treatment in the person's best interests.

Any intervention must also depend on a physical assessment, which considers the likelihood of the imminent risk to the person of loss of life or limb. If it is felt that, without immediate treatment, there would be a significant or irreversible deterioration in health, AWAS has a duty to intervene safely and provide care in the person's best interests.

In circumstances where the ambulance crew feel the person will physically resist efforts to take them to hospital, and the person is so violent or dangerous that police assistance is needed, they may request the police to attend to provide assistance or support in removal of the person by force if necessary. The ambulance crew will provide a full briefing to the police officers, including the results of their assessment of the person's capacity, and give a clear request of the nature of the assistance required from the police.

The role of the police in supporting AWAS in these circumstances will be to prevent crime and/or a breach of the peace and, where requested by a member of the ambulance crew, to assist in restraining the person in order that he/she may be conveyed to hospital and/or treated as necessary in his/her best interests and police officers may use such force as is reasonable, necessary and proportionate to those ends.

The police officer will record the matter in an Evidential Report Book and a member of the ambulance crew will endorse the report to the effect that they believe the person lacks the mental capacity to refuse or consent to treatment, that urgent treatment is required to prevent loss of life and/or serious or irreversible deterioration in the person's condition, and that police assistance is requested to prevent crime and/or prevent a breach of the peace and/or to enable the person to be conveyed to hospital and/or treated as necessary in his best interests.

12. Removal to Ambulance & Manual Handling:

Patients must be removed from scene to the ambulance using the most expedient route and method available based upon their clinical needs. It is essential that staff constantly reassess the patient's condition to ensure the method of removal is compatible with minimising any risks for the patient.

In particular, there are many conditions that have potentially serious implications, i.e. chest pain, for patients who for example feel they are being helpful in volunteering to walk to the ambulance. In such cases, staff must use their skills in gently explaining the potential harm that can arise from such action and persuade the patient to comply with the treatment regime provided by the crew.

Staff must ensure that all efforts are made to protect the privacy, confidentiality and dignity of their patients. These not only reflect the rights of patients as individuals, but treating all patients with courtesy and consideration significantly helps them to feel safe and secure. Similarly, attention given to the positioning and comfort of patients during the removal and subsequent journey only adds to enhance the overall patient experience.

For the purposes of mobility classification, patients conveyed by AWAS are categorised as one of the following:

Stretcher – patients who must be carried to and into the ambulance, and who are required to travel on the trolley bed.

Chair – patients who must either be carried to and into the ambulance, or who can walk to and into the ambulance with the assistance of two staff, and who may travel in a sitting position.

Walking – patients who require no assistance, or the assistance of one member of staff to walk to and step up into the ambulance, and may travel in a sitting position.

Staff must determine the mobility classification of emergency and non-emergency patients based upon their clinical assessment, and the requirements of current clinical protocols and guidelines. Once again, the potential risks for patient harm caused by inaccurate and inadvertent patient/staff actions cannot be overemphasised.

Where a mobility classification has already been determined, e.g. non-urgent journeys, that classification must be adhered to as the minimum requirement. Where there is a significant discrepancy between the classification given and the assessed clinical needs of the patient, details should be noted on PRF.

Patients with mobility aids should be allowed to use and take these with them if they so wish and if deemed appropriate by staff. Patients in wheelchairs must be transferred to a fixed seat or trolley bed once on board the ambulance, and if the wheelchair is to be taken it must be safely stowed. If the vehicle has the capability of securing a wheelchair with the patient restrained, this should be utilised if clinically appropriate.

Non-emergency patients who are required on clinical grounds to stay in their wheelchairs during conveyance will only be conveyed in an appropriate vehicle with floor clamps, and a safety harnesses used to secure the patient.

Should a patient be reluctant or unwilling to allow staff to comply with the mobility classification that is relevant in their case, staff must make determined and tactful attempts to persuade the patient to comply.

Should a patient continue to act against the advice given, the Operations Manager/s should be informed at the earliest opportunity and the details recorded on the PRF. This information should also be included in the handover to staff at the receiving destination. All efforts must be made to ensure that any potential clinical risks that are a result of the patient's actions contrary to advice are kept to a minimum.

Ambulance staff should undertake a risk assessment of the situation in which they find their patient. If they estimate any factors to be beyond their capabilities then the assistance of a second ambulance crew or other services should be sought.

The rear suspension of the vehicle (Where appropriate) should be lowered when loading and unloading patients. Walking patients should use the hand rails provided to assist themselves into and out of the vehicle. Ambulance staff will need to give additional guidance if the person is injured, disabled, hard-of-hearing or has impaired sight.

Ambulance staff can request assistance from responsible personnel such as police officers, nursing and porter staff and members of the public, but they must give clear and concise instructions and not ask them to undertake any activity that is obviously beyond their capability or which they are reluctant to do.

Staff should use, where appropriate and where training has been undertaken, all available lifting aids supplied by the Service. If other lifting equipment is available on scene, for example, hoists, consideration should be given to allowing only the persons trained in use of the equipment to assist in the lift.

Ambulance staff called to attend patients in Care Homes are duty bound to fully examine, assess and treat appropriately. If it is necessary to lift the patient, staff should seek alternatives to manual handling such as hoist and slides if suitably qualified persons are present.

If patients in Care Homes are found to be uninjured the responsibility for lifting should be passed back to the Care Home staff.

13. En-route to Destination:

In order to give maximum protection to patients and escorts whilst on Service vehicles, every effort must be made to ensure that seat restraints are used. Patients and escorts who decline to wear seat restraints should have their attention drawn to the notice displayed. If they still decline, a reference to this must be recorded on the reverse of the PRF and wherever possible a signature should be obtained. Attendants must wear seat belts in the rear of ambulances, unless to do so would hinder their ability to care for the patient. The legal responsibility for ensuring that a child under the age of 14 is restrained in the back of the ambulance, where it is possible to do so, rests with the driver.

The attendant must travel in the back of the ambulance with the patient AT ALL TIMES, however, if a number of health care professionals are escorting the patient, the attendant may travel in the front of the ambulance, but must be prepared to assist the escorting team if required. The person with clinical primacy must remain with the patient or suitably delegate this responsibility.

The decision as to how many friends or relatives travel with the patient rests with the crew, and must be based upon both the patient's needs and the practicalities of the patient's treatment.

When allowing escorts to travel with the patient, consider the following factors:

- ✚ Maximum loading on the vehicle, including patient and ambulance staff must not exceed the legal maximum for the vehicle.
- ✚ Escorts who are themselves distressed may have an adverse effect on the patient.
- ✚ Ambulance staff safety is paramount – escorts who appear drunk/disorderly may compromise that safety (especially if two or more). Equally, refusing an escort may aggravate the situation and will require careful judgement by the crew.
- ✚ If the patient is in cardiac arrest, or arrest is imminent, a relative/close friend may benefit emotionally from witnessing that everything possible was being done. If the decision is taken not to convey the relative/close friend with the patient, consideration should be given to arranging alternative transport.

If the attendant decides not to allow escorts, this message should be conveyed with sensitivity, tact and diplomacy.

Wherever possible the PRF should be completed whilst en-route to hospital. If this cannot be achieved then the PRF should be completed as soon as possible on arrival at hospital. In the event that a Doctor or RRV has attended the call prior to an ambulance, a copy of the single responder patient handover record should be given to the crew conveying the patient so that it forms part of the overall patient record.

In some situations, clinical care and handover takes priority over completion of the PRF, particularly where patients are time critical (i.e. major trauma, stroke and EMI). Rapid transport to definitive care must not be delayed in order to complete a PRF on scene. In time-critical cases the PRF should be completed as soon as possible and then left with the receiving clinician to form part of the patient's record.

14. Actions at Destination:

Upon arrival at the destination the patient should be removed from the ambulance using the most appropriate and safe means for their clinical condition.

A clinical hand over of the patient should be given to the Health Care Professional taking responsibility for that patient, using the PRF to provide structure and clarity of the information provided.

The patient's privacy must be maintained at all times. Patient handover should be undertaken discreetly, minimising any possibility that confidential patient information may be overheard.

Once the clinical hand over is complete, the receiving clinician should sign and retain a copy of the PRF. At this point responsibility for the patient is transferred to the receiving health care staff.

Ambulance staff should also hand over any other relevant information regarding the patient's circumstances – See Section 9.4 Patient Welfare and Section 9.5 Patient Protection for details.

It is the responsibility of the hospital to ensure that their administrative process is fulfilled.

Ambulance staff will leave a copy of the PRF with the hospital in the pre-arranged location, but should not be involved in the generation of the hospital patient record. AWAS Staff should not carry out a verbal handover to reception staff, enter details on the hospital computer, or source the patient's hospital notes.

It is critical that the copy of the PRF is clearly legible. Staff should use a black ball point pen; press on a firm surface and sufficiently hard. If this copy is not legible, it should be over-written before being handed to the receiving unit.

Ambulance staff should inform Operations, as early as possible, of any potential delays as a result of the patient's condition. Any other delays should also be reported to Operations at the time of the delay (not retrospectively). A note will then be added to the electronic spreadsheet and this should also be documented on the PRF. Actions taken to mitigate and reduce such delays should also be recorded. Operations Manager/s must be informed of any "arrival to patient handover" delays exceeding 10 minutes.

It is essential that ambulance staff ensure their availability is reported promptly to the Operations desk after patient hand over. After reporting availability to Operations, the ambulance crew may return to station or undertake active area cover, as directed by Operations Manager/s. Ambulance crews may avail themselves to local facilities providing they remain immediately available to respond to a call.

All non-disposable equipment and blankets taken with the patient should be retrieved, where possible, before leaving. This may be achieved by a direct swap. In the event of any essential equipment being left this must be documented on the PRF and Operations staff informed. Any equipment not retrieved by the end of the shift must be verbally reported to the oncoming crew. Every attempt must be made to retrieve the equipment during the course of the shift.

15. Conveyance to a Pre-Designated Ward or Department (not Emergency Department (ED) or other Emergency Referral Unit):

AWAS conveys both acute and non-acute patients during the course of its work. In all instances the needs of the patient must remain paramount until responsibility for care has been properly and safely transferred; there is a need to be mindful of the impact on service delivery caused by excessive delays.

If ambulance staff have concerns over the clinical condition of the patient at the pickup point or en-route, they should consider the need to pre-warn the designated unit, via the Operations Manager/s, of their arrival. Where appropriate, ambulance staff may request via Operations that a clinician is available to meet the crew on arrival.

There are situations when the patient's condition deteriorates en-route, to the extent that in the ambulance staff's judgement it is deemed inappropriate to complete the designated journey.

Should the decision be taken to divert to the nearest ED, EOC should be contacted immediately to:

- ✚ Pre-warn the ED via the Operations Manager/s.
- ✚ Notify the unit previously expecting the patient.
- ✚ Notify the referring clinician of the change.

Clinical escorts should be involved in this decision making process as appropriate.

For patient transfers to non-acute hospital destinations (i.e. mental health unit), it is advisable for Operations Manager/s to obtain the following information:

- ✚ The location of the unit.
- ✚ The reception point for the patient.
- ✚ If out of hours, the entrance to the receiving facility and the method employed to gain access.

Where the patient is being conveyed out of hours and the entrance to the hospital/designated receiving unit may be locked, ambulance staff should inform Operations/Duty Officer of their pending arrival. Operations/Duty Officer staff should then contact the person on call in the hospital to allow for a member of staff to be ready to facilitate access.

16. Patients Not Conveyed to a Treatment Centre:

It is essential that ambulance crews make every reasonable effort to undertake a full patient assessment, treat and where indicated convey patients to the most appropriate facility.

When an ambulance has been instructed by another health care professional, AWAS staff must convey that patient to the agreed treatment/care centre. The only exception to this should if the patient has mental capacity and adamantly refuses to travel to that destination. In this situation the crew concerned should contact Operations Manager/s who must make every effort to speak with the health care professional or ward who made the arrangements and discuss the case.

Should a patient decline conveyance to hospital following ambulance assistance or treatment, staff should base their attempts to persuade the patient to travel upon clinical need/urgency. It is essential, therefore, that all patients receive a comprehensive clinical assessment, and every appropriate effort made to persuade the patient to travel. It may be appropriate in these circumstances to take the patient to an alternative health care provider.

For a patient to make a valid refusal of treatment, they must retain the mental capacity to do so, refuse treatment voluntarily and have received sufficient information for that decision to be informed.

Where the patient continues to decline conveyance despite appropriate advice, the Operations Manager/s must be informed and all relevant information recorded on the PRF. The patient (or parent/Guardian of the patient if under 18) should sign the reverse on the PRF to indicate treatment and/or transport has been refused.

Where a patient lacks the capacity to make an informed decision crews may act under common law and the Mental Capacity Act (2005) in the best interests of the patient to affect conveyance.

In situations where a patient declines or does not require conveyance to an Emergency Department (or other facility) and this decision is valid (i.e. the patient has capacity, the decision is informed and given voluntarily), AWAS staff may leave the patient at scene. In certain situations, it may be appropriate to convey the patient to their home address or other location.

A completed copy of the PRF (and any ECG or other AWAS documentation) must be left with the patient or a responsible person. Clear advice must be provided to the patient/responsible person about any follow-up assessment or treatment that is required and where to seek further medical advice/assistance if required (this may include advising to call 999).

If a referral to another Healthcare Professional or pathway has been made, full details of that referral must be recorded on the PRF.

16.1 Paediatric Patients Not Conveyed to a Treatment Centre:

Children under two years old

All children under the age of 2 years should be conveyed to a hospital. This is to apply in all circumstances unless the parent(s) legal guardian(s) decline hospital treatment/attendance. In certain situations, a child may have a Patient Specific Protocol (PSP) which should be followed and where the child fulfils the criteria on the PSP they need not be conveyed to hospital.

If the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) decline hospital treatment/attendance, the child should be referred to their GP. If the crew have concerns for the patient, consideration should be given to a safeguarding referral and if necessary further support can be sought through the Operations Desk. All these concerns should be documented in full on the PRF.

The parents/guardians are to be informed that if the patient deteriorates they can call 999. A copy of the completed PRF must be left on scene.

Special care should be taken with children who have an apparent life-threatening event (such as apnoea and goes floppy) but appear fully recovered on AWAS arrival at scene. These apparent life-threatening events can be linked to serious underlying pathology and can be warning signs which need to be followed up.

Children aged two to five:

In the unlikely event an assessment has been undertaken and the clinical on scene deems that a child (aged two to five) does not need further assessment or treatment at hospital, the following should be undertaken:

- ✚ At least two full sets of observations taken at least 20 minutes apart including respiratory rate, pulse rate, capillary refill, capillary blood glucose (where there has been any reduced level of consciousness), pulse oximetry and temperature. These observations should be within expected norms for a child of the appropriate age. Expected normal ranges of observations are detailed in the JRCALC Clinical Practice Guidelines. In addition to this, full details of the clinical assessment must be recorded on the PRF.
- ✚ The parents/guardians must be informed that if the child deteriorates they can call 999. A copy of the completed PRF must be left on scene. If the parents/guardians decline hospital treatment/attendance, the same process as detailed for infants under 2 years of age must be followed.

In situations where a child aged five to twelve is not conveyed to hospital, serious consideration must be given to referring the patient to their GP for further assessment and treatment.

Staff should remain mindful that they can seek advice from the Operations Manager/s at any time.

17. Advanced Decisions:

An advance decision can be made by a patient in the event they are unable to consent for themselves or unable to communicate specific wishes regarding treatment they do not want to receive. An advance decision is binding if:

- ✚ The person making the decision was 18 or over at the time it was made and had the necessary capacity.
- ✚ It specifies the specific treatment to be refused and the circumstances in which the refusal is to apply.
- ✚ The advance decision has not been withdrawn at a time when the patient still had the capacity to do so.
- ✚ A lasting power of attorney has not been appointed since the decision was made.

Advanced decisions can be oral or in writing, however it will only apply to life sustaining treatment if it is in writing, is signed, witnessed and contains a specifically worded statement that it is to apply even where there is a risk to life.

In an emergency or where there is doubt about the existence or validity of an advance decision, treatment can be provided that is immediately necessary to stabilise or to prevent deterioration until such a time that the existence of the advance decision can be determined.

18. Care of the Dying Patient:

On occasions patients who are dying, make a statement which could be relevant to:

- ✚ Their cause of death.
- ✚ The circumstances of their death.
- ✚ Personal wishes at the time of death, possibly concerning property or their feelings.

This constitutes a dying declaration and the information may be used in Court if the patient's death is connected with an illegal act. If a patient knows they are dying and makes a statement, ambulance staff should write down where possible, what was said and the patient should sign the declaration. Any declaration must be given to the police along with a statement from the ambulance staff concerned.

An ambulance may be called to a terminally ill patient where death is imminent. A decision may have been made by either the patient and/or the patient's medical team that resuscitation should not take place. This is commonly referred to as a DNA-CPR or DNAR and indicates that a decision has been reached that resuscitation should not be undertaken. This can be for a number of reasons including, but not limited to, the clinical futility of resuscitation or a patient's expressed wishes. The actual DNA-CPR form needs to be seen by the ambulance crew.

Details of the DNA-CPR may have been passed to the crew via the Operations desk if the DNA-CPR form or end of life care information has been received by the office. Equally information may exist on the ward. Specific instructions or medications should be utilised to ensure the patient has a comfortable and dignified death in their preferred place of care (often their own home). It is important that preferred priorities of care are established by discussion with the patient and/or relatives/Palliative Care Team/GP/Ward staff. Early communication with the Operations Desk when attending a patient for unscheduled care in the palliative or terminal phase can provide additional advice and support.

A DNA-CPR can be in a number of forms such as a specifically designed form, a letter from the supervising clinician or an entry into the patient's notes. The ambulance crew should confirm that the DNA-CPR is for the named patient and that if a review date has been stated that the form, that it is within date. It should be noted that not all DNA-CPR orders will have a review date on and they should be considered indefinite.

Uncommonly, some patients for whom a DNA-CPR decision has been established may develop cardiac or respiratory arrest from a readily reversible cause such as choking, induction of anaesthesia, anaphylaxis or blocked tracheostomy tube. In such situations CPR would be appropriate, while the reversible cause is treated, unless the patient has specifically refused intervention in these circumstances.

A DNA-CPR relates purely to cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and does not affect other treatment. Staff should consider any underlying conditions and if appropriate seek advice regarding the most appropriate treatment for the patient.

When a patient's death is expected due to terminal illness resuscitation does not have to be commenced or continued. This is detailed in JRCALC Clinical Practice Guidelines. In this situation sufficient evidence must be available to support this decision not to start or continue resuscitation (for examples clinical notes, end of life care drugs, communication with other health care professionals). Confirmation can be received verbally on scene or remotely by telephone. The Operations Desk can assist with gaining this information or assisting in the decision making process, possibly involving the on call Clinical Advisor at the relevant hospital. In all instances of ambulance staff being present when death occurs, even if the death is expected, PRF must be completed, giving exact time of death, persons present etc.

18.1 Unexpected death at a home or place of residence/attendance:

When an unexpected death occurs at home or place of residence, the attending ambulance crew must complete a PRF, irrespective of any prior treatment to the Patient. The crew must contact the Operations Manager/Duty Officer to request the attendance of the police. The police must be informed of all unexpected deaths as it is their responsibility to establish if the death is suspicious and to liaise with the Coroner's office. The Coroner must be informed of all deaths in their jurisdiction, however not all deaths will result in an inquest. A copy of the completed PRF must be handed to the attending police officer. AWAS staff are then free to leave scene.

Under no circumstances should a deceased patient be removed from the scene without authority from the Coroner.

The body must not be moved before the arrival of the police. In cases of unexpected death, once recognition of life extinct has been undertaken, all invasive devices (endotracheal tube, intravenous cannulae etc.) must be left in situ. Any monitoring/defibrillator electrodes must also be left in place.

18.2 Unexpected death in a public place:

Once ambulance staff have recognised life to be extinct, copies of the completed PRF must be handed to the attending police officer. If the police are not on scene, their attendance must be requested via Operations. All efforts must be made to conceal the body from public view; however the body should not be moved. AWAS staff must remain on scene until the police are in attendance, once the relevant information and documentation has been handed to the attending police officer the crew are then in a position to leave the scene.

It is not the responsibility of AWAS to remove deceased patients from scene. In exceptional circumstances and only when the attending police officer has liaised with the Coroner's Office, AWAS crews may assist in removing the deceased to a public mortuary. The destination of the patient will be determined by the Coroner's office.

Under no circumstances should a deceased patient be removed from the scene without authority from the Coroner. An individual police officer cannot authorise the removal of a deceased patient, only a Coroner or Coroner's officer can do this. If an AWAS crew have been asked by a police officer or doctor to remove the deceased from scene, assurance must be sought to ensure that the Coroner has been informed and document on the PRF and the shoulder number of the police officer authorising the removal and the name of the Coroners Officer authorising it.

18.3 Death in unusual or suspicious circumstances:

Ambulance clinicians cannot determine whether a death is suspicious or not. When requesting police assistance, the death should be defined as expected or unexpected. However, when unusual or suspicious circumstances are present all reasonable precautions to preserve the potential crime scene should be taken. Any findings, observations or disturbance to the scene prior to police arrival should be documented and handed over to the relevant police officer.

18.4 Sudden Unexpected Death of an Infant (Under 2 years of age):

In the event of being called to attend an infant the following applies:

- ✚ Resuscitation should always be initiated unless clearly inappropriate.
- ✚ In cases where active resuscitation is not taking place and life has been recognised extinct, the infant must still be conveyed to an Emergency Department that accepts paediatrics. The hospital must be pre alerted, however it must be clearly stated in the pre alert that the child is deceased and no resuscitation is being undertaken. This will facilitate early examination by a Paediatrician.
- ✚ Infants must **not** be conveyed directly to the mortuary.
- ✚ Only in cases of severe trauma or decomposition should the infant be left on scene. Under these circumstances the crew must remain on scene and the police must be asked to attend.
- ✚ If significant concerns are raised at any stage about the possibility of abuse or neglect, a decision may be taken for the police to become the “lead agency”. The police should be informed immediately that significant suspicion arises to ensure any further interviews with the family accord with the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The AWAS policy for children and vulnerable adults may also be of use in these circumstances.
- ✚ Keep the parents informed of your actions.
- ✚ In cases where the infant is conveyed to hospital the name of the hospital clinician who receives the hand over must be clearly documented. In the rare situation where the infant remains on scene the shoulder number of the police officer in attendance must be recorded in the appropriate place on the PRF.
- ✚ A Recognition of Life Extinct (ROLE) form must be completed and handed to the hospital clinician or police officer.

18.5 Sudden Unexpected Death of a Patient Aged 2-18:

In the event of attending the unexpected death of a patient aged 2-18 years old, the following applies:

- ✚ Standard ROLE procedure should occur as per JRCALC clinical guidance. The patient should not be moved from scene without permission of the Coroners officer.
- ✚ Keep the parents informed of your actions.
- ✚ If significant concerns are raised at any stage about the possibility of abuse or neglect, a decision may be taken for the police to become the “lead agency”. The police should be informed immediately that significant suspicion arises to ensure any further interviews with the family accord with the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The AWAS policy for children and vulnerable adults may also be of use in these circumstances.
- ✚ A Station Officer should be sent to all deaths of a patient under 18 years old to ensure staff welfare and to support the above actions.

Sections 19.4 and 19.5 do not apply in cases of expected death of an infant, child or adolescent due to terminal illness. In most cases the Operations Desk will be contacted in advance of a child entering the terminal phase of life, due to a life limiting illness, in order for patient specific plans to be put in place. The ward should be contacted to assist staff with the clinical management of this patient group.

Definition of Responsible or Competent Person:

A competent or responsible individual is defined as:

- ✚ One who is able to understand the information relevant to the decision.
- ✚ One who is able to retain that information.
- ✚ One who is able to use or weigh that information as part of the process of making the decision.
- ✚ One who is able to communicate his decision by using any recognisable means of communication.

The factors that will determine that the individual is capable of looking after the patient are:

- ✚ Has access to a telephone.
- ✚ Knows the patient's General Practitioner's contact details.
- ✚ Is able to communicate with the emergency services.

The greater the clinical risk of the incident, the greater the competency required of the person accepting responsibility for the patient and the lower the threshold for contacting other agencies. Only after confirming that the above criteria have been met should ambulance staff deem it appropriate to leave a patient in that person's care.

