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Dear Councillor

Hoping that I am not too late, may I begin with wishing you a very happy 2025. I am sure, as ever, it will be full of challenges, and of course, opportunities.

Although part of a much larger group covering the whole of Solihull Borough and Birmingham, I wanted to update you on our local Arden Team of Ambulance Community First Responders (CFRs) for the year just ended.

We had successful recruitment campaigns in January and June, and although still a relatively small group, we continue to make a big contribution in the locality and beyond. We have volunteers living in Dickens Heath, Hockley Heath, Catherine de Barnes, Dorridge, Knowle, Barston and Balsall Common.

We are despatched to the most urgent 999 calls by West Midlands Ambulance Emergency Operations Centre. Because we are local, we can be on scene quickly to commence lifesaving treatment, begin clinical care and provide reassurance to patient and relatives. We have to train and be prepared for every kind of emergency, involving patients of all ages. This year, our youngest patient was just 12 days, the oldest 104 years.



In 2024, our local scheme car, RC 439A, was tasked to 580 emergency 999 calls. It was donated by JLR in 2019, and it's as ready to respond in all weathers now as it was then. Over these six years, our volunteers have answered over 3,000 emergencies in this Discovery Sport. Lives saved, casualties helped and families grateful. A huge team effort, from a dedicated group.

One third of our calls were Category One, deemed immediately life threatening, such as cardiac arrests, choking, fitting, and anaphylaxis. The balance, Category Two, also life threatening, included heart attacks, strokes, allergic reactions, severe haemorrhage, asthma, road traffic collisions and falls with serious injury. We were first to arrive in 90% of calls.

We already know the demands placed upon the NHS in general, but West Midlands Ambulance Service is, in particular, under enormous pressure. FastAid volunteers have reacted with increased commitment; doing their best to continue to serve our neighbourhoods, to save lives and improve patient outcomes whilst we wait for our Ambulance Service colleagues to back us up on scene. Currently, for Category Two calls, that may take 30 minutes and more.



We have heard just this last weekend that so critical is the service we deliver, our radius for calls is now doubled, up to 10 miles. We can be asked to respond throughout Solihull, to adjacent villages and beyond, if we are the closest resource or when more support is urgently required, just as our other FastAid colleagues are be tasked to calls in our locality.

When we add our call numbers to that of RC 324A, the response car based nearby in central Solihull, at Solihull Fire Station, a staggering 1,250 emergency calls were answered just in this last year. One of our Balsall Common responders uses her own car, so we are well above 1,300 annually. We also have a car based in the north of the Borough; how is that for service to our Solihull Community? All from volunteers.

It costs a lot to run and equip the three scheme cars in Solihull, to provide uniform and personal equipment to our CFRs. The annual costs of running our charity exceeds £30,000. We receive no external funding, we are entirely reliant on grants and donations. We are extremely grateful to Sian Bishop of your Community Development Team and to the team from Heart of England Community Foundation. The funding provided by SMBC is vital. Your Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire (CSW)



Communities Fund provided £3,000 to ensure our newest recruits are equipped to volunteer. Eversfield Preparatory School spent a whole school year working hard to raise funds and in June, presented FastAid with a cheque for a staggering £11,800. Other community groups have also rallied round; we were made charity of the year by Shirley Late Knights (Shirley 41 Club), and Solihull Blossomfield Townswomen's Guild. One staff member at Peterbrook School did a sponsored shave of his beard and raised £350. We later had fun with the children showing our car and equipment.

As well as responding as CFRs, our volunteers regularly conduct free lifesaving training, look after local Public Access Defibrillators (many of which also contain Bleed Kits), provide medical cover supporting community groups and other charities at local events such as Sils Junior Rugby Festival, Lions Festive Walk, Knowle Fun Run, Balsall Common Fireworks, Fun in the Park and Barston Village Fete. Our CFRs have also signed up to the Good Sam App, which makes them available for alerts to cardiac arrests 24 hours a day. Every day.



In just one single shift in December, a day of 8 calls for RC 439A; one of our CFRs attended two cardiac arrests. In the first, he was part of a team of three CFRs, two ambulance crews, a paramedic officer and the Air Ambulance. A successful resuscitation was obtained with Chief Officer's Commendations awarded to our three CFRs for a life saved. Four from Team Arden received the King's Coronation Medal for their role in our 'front line' emergency services. One our Arden team also received the Celebration of Volunteering Certificate to commemorate 50 years of the County of West Midlands

We were in schools for National ReStart a Heart Week in October demonstrating CPR. We have worked with West Midlands Police at Knife Crime events and also supported the Violence against Women Campaign.

Even after gaining our qualification, we meet and train monthly. Every year we have to update our skills, involving a mandatory workbook and further training sessions, which not only include lifesaving assessments, but other requirements such as Safeguarding, Recognising Radicalisation, Mental Health, Conflict Resolution, Road Traffic Collisions and Major Incidents.

This year we trained for and are included in WMAS 'Ten Second Triage' for major incidents.



We joined with our colleagues at Solihull Fire Station for some really hands on training for road traffic collisions. We have a fantastic facility there with a base for RC 324A, and a great relationship with the Service. Our grateful thanks for making us so welcome.



As you will have seen, we are all volunteers with a commitment to serving our community. Solihull.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, we know how busy you are as one of our local Councillors. I have tried to keep it short. Please do get in touch if you have any questions or if we can provide any further information.

And again, best wishes for 2025.

Terry

Terry Flower, Arden Team, FastAid.

January 2025