

Alpha Care Ambulance Service Limited

# Alpha Care Ambulance Service

## Quality Report

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This report describes our judgement of the quality of care at this provider. It is based on a combination of what we found when we inspected, other information known to CQC and information given to us from patients, the public and other organisations.

# Summary of findings

## Letter from the Chief Inspector of Hospitals

Alpha Care Ambulance Service is an independent medical transport provider based in Moulsoford, Oxfordshire. The service provides a patient transport service and medical cover at events. Services are staffed by trained paramedics, emergency care technicians, ambulance care assistants and technicians.

We inspected this service as a follow-up, responsive inspection to our inspections of 14 March 2017, when the service was suspended until 16 May 2017, and an unannounced inspection on 10 May 2017. At this time improvements had been made and the suspension was lifted.

We carried out this inspection on 10 October 2017 and our specific focus was to determine if improvements had been made against the areas highlighted in the section 29 warning notice issued on 22 June 2017.

We looked at governance under the Well-led key line of enquiry, as highlighted in the warning notice.

To get to the heart of patients' experiences of care and treatment, we ask the same five questions of all services: are they safe, effective, caring, responsive to people's needs, and well-led? We have not commented on caring in this report, as there were no concerns highlighted from the previous inspection.

Throughout the inspection, we took account of what people told us and how the provider understood and complied with the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

### **Services we do not rate**

We regulate independent ambulance services but we do not currently have a legal duty to rate them. We highlight good practice and issues that service providers need to improve and take regulatory action as necessary.

We found that the service provider had made significant improvements in key areas such as staff training and monitoring of their service.

However, we also found the following issues that the service provider needs to improve:

- The service did not have a risk register relating to the business.
- Governance meetings were being held on an informal basis and details of those meetings were not recorded.

Following this inspection, we told the provider that it should make some improvements, even though a regulation had not been breached, to help the service improve.

### **Amanda Stanford**

Deputy Chief Inspector of Hospitals, on behalf of the Chief Inspector of Hospitals

# Alpha Care Ambulance Service

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# Detailed findings

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## Background to Alpha Care Ambulance Service

Alpha Care Ambulance Service is operated by Alpha Care Ambulance Service Limited. The service was registered on 27 July 2011. It is an independent ambulance service based in Moulsoford, Oxfordshire. The service primarily provides school transport for children with special needs. The service also provides non-emergency patient transport and medical cover at events to private organisations on an ad-hoc basis. Services are staffed by trained paramedics, ambulance technicians and ambulance care assistants. The service primarily serves the communities of Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

The service has had a registered manager in post since 27 July 2011.

Alpha Care Ambulance Service fleet consists of eleven vehicles: three front line ambulances, five patient transport ambulances, one wheelchair access vehicle, three response cars and a support lorry for events. Four of the patient transport ambulances are fitted with one stretcher and three seats. The service employs four whole time equivalent employed staff, two school term-time only staff and they have one member of staff on a bank contract. The service provides cover seven days a week for its patient transport service.

## Our inspection team

The team that inspected the service comprised a CQC lead inspector and one other CQC inspector. Lisa Cook, Inspection Manager, oversaw the inspection team.

The inspection process was overseen by Nick Mulholland, Head of Hospital Inspection.

# Patient transport services (PTS)

Well-led

Overall

## Information about the service

Alpha Care Ambulance Service is an independent ambulance service, which provides non-emergency patient transport services. They also supply first aid services to public events. The service is staffed by two registered paramedics, one technician, one emergency care technician and three ambulance care assistants.

We inspected this service as a patient transport service as this was their primary work.

The service primarily provided school transport for children with special educational needs. Additional ad-hoc work consisted of journey types and categories of patient transported such as long distance road ambulance transfers, hospital to hospital and medical standby for public events.

The service is registered to provide the following regulated activities:

- Transport services, triage and medical advice provided remotely
- Treatment of disease, disorder or injury.

During the inspection, we visited the service base located in Moulsoford, Oxfordshire, and we spoke with five staff including registered paramedics, patient transport drivers and service managers.

The service had been inspected twice in December 2013 and then on 14 March 2017, after which the service had its registration suspended due to significant concerns of the immediate risk to patients. There was a follow-up inspection on 10 May 2017, after which we confirmed the registration suspension could be lifted due to improvements in the service.

Prior to the inspection we reviewed an action plan that had been developed and provided by the service following the warning notice being issued.

## Summary of findings

We found that the service provider had made significant improvements in key areas such as staff training and monitoring of their service.

# Patient transport services (PTS)

## Are patient transport services well-led?

Well-led means that the leadership, management and governance of the organisation make sure it provides high-quality care based on your individual needs, that it encourages learning and innovation, and that it promotes an open and fair culture.

### **Governance, risk management and quality measurement (and service overall if this is the main service provided)**

- At the last inspection on 10 May 2017 we found significant concerns regarding the governance and risk management processes of the service. As a result, we issued a section 29 warning notice against Regulation 17,(1)(2)(a)(b)(f), Good Governance, of The Health and Social Care Act (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014.
  - At the time of the last inspection the service did not hold a risk register or have other similar systems to identify and monitor or grade risks to the organisation, both clinical and non-clinical. There was also no evidence of governance meetings taking place with no audit strategy or plan in place for the service. There was no oversight of recruitment requirements regarding staff receiving appropriate support, training, professional development, supervision and appraisal.
  - During this inspection on 10 October 2017, we found significant changes had been made, with progress made with their action plan and in response to the warning notice.
  - There was an up to date risk register for patient safety, ambulances and station but the service did not have a risk register for the business. However, the registered manager was aware of the need to discuss and identify the risks posed to the business to ensure they monitored and managed risk appropriately. There was also a current and up to date business continuity and management policy.
  - The service continued to hold informal governance meetings; the contents of these were not yet being recorded. However, staff were able to evidence through discussion the importance of recording the meetings.
- The service confirmed to us that in the future, formal governance meetings would take place to review areas of the service including the risk register and infection control to identify where improvements could be made.
- We saw evidence that audits were now occurring to ensure the quality of the service was being monitored effectively. We saw evidence of audits including hand hygiene, equipment and infection control for all areas of the station. The service were aware of the benefits of holding staff and governance meetings to discuss the results of the audits and to gather staff feedback.
  - In addition, we saw there was a medicines audit trail from the station to the ambulance. All out of date stock medicine had been removed from the vehicles and storage cupboards and there was a medicines policy, which was in date. Records showed all staff received yearly medicine management training which were relevant to the individual staff's role.
  - There were drug protocols which were signed by the medical director who, we were told, would also carry out spot checks on ambulances when on events.
  - The service also received patient safety alerts and alerts from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) which we saw were displayed on the staff notice board.
  - Staff training certificates regarding the safe administration and use of oxygen and nitrous oxide were seen. We also saw evidence that staff had received training in resuscitation, dealing with children with epilepsy, administration of buccal midazolam if a child has seizure activity, tracheostomy care and personal care, amongst other competencies.
  - E-learning courses relevant to individual staff training needs were recorded and a system for monitoring staff compliance with mandatory training was seen also on the staff database used by the service.
  - The service sourced competency-based training from an external company and also used the services of specialist community nurses from NHS trusts for their training needs. Staff had been invited, and had attended, specialist training within special needs schools.

# Patient transport services (PTS)

- We saw evidence all staff had received level 3 face to face and e-learning safeguarding adult and children's training. The two managers for the service had received level 4 training from the Oxfordshire safeguarding children's board.
- Another area of concern noted from the previous inspection on 10 May 2017 was the lack of assurance around the governance of the deep clean of ambulances.
- During this inspection we were assured that the service were deep cleaning the ambulances at least once a month and were documenting this appropriately. We saw evidence of a standard operating procedure for the deep cleans. Once each ambulance was deep cleaned it was checked by another member of staff to ensure compliance with the procedure. We reviewed evidence of checklists which confirmed the ambulances had been cleaned in accordance with the policy, with detail of the cleaning equipment and chemicals used. We were told that staff were challenged regarding the cleanliness of the ambulances when they are reviewed. We spoke with staff who confirmed this procedure was followed.
- There had been no incidents reported since our last inspection. The service had produced information for staff detailing different kinds of incidents and we saw that this was displayed on the staff information board. Staff told us they had been reminded about incidents and how to report these.

# Outstanding practice and areas for improvement

## Areas for improvement

### Action the hospital **SHOULD** take to improve

- The service should implement a risk register relating to the business to ensure risks are monitored and managed.
- The service should hold formal governance meetings and should ensure that these are formally recorded and documented.