

NEWS

Private firms to be used after risk summit into ambulance trust cases

Our region's ambulance service will use vehicles from private firms to help meet demand, following a risk summit triggered by concerns that at least 40 patients were either harmed or died due to delays over Christmas and New Year.

The region's clinical commissioning groups, which buy health services from providers for us, has also been told to moderate the use of ambulance services and use alternatives wherever possible. Last week, we reported that a damning dossier from a whistleblower in a senior position at the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust claimed that between December 18 and January 3 at least 19 people died and 21 people were harmed after significant delays in reaching these patients. Speaking in the Commons, former Health Minister Norman Lamb has since said: "Beyond the

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list of 40 cases, I understand a further 120 incidents of potential harm and a potential 81 deaths have been associated with delays over this period. "According to many people internally, the service was unsafe. On several occasions, more than 200 999 calls could not be responded to at the moment they came in because no crews or ambulances were available. "It is frightening to wait interminably for an ambulance when a loved one is potentially dying, and is intolerable in a civilised society." Health Minister Stephen Barclay said: "I am assured, where there were serious delays in response times, the ambulance trust has identified all potential causes. It is examining 22 cases through the serious incident

procedure." The risk summit, co-hosted by NHS England and NHS Improvement, identified seven key actions. More staff and vehicles will be deployed between now and Easter, with additional vehicles secured from independent providers, and the ambulance trust's leave policy will be reviewed to try to improve staff availability at peak times. An ambulance trust spokesman said: "We will be working with partners and staff to meet the actions. Each of the potentially serious incidents recorded while the ambulance trust was experiencing high levels of demand are being investigated internally. These will also be thoroughly and independently reviewed to ascertain whether patients were harmed. This will be concluded by Easter. "The list of potentially serious incidents highlighted by MPs will be shared with us and included in the review."

Author visit



Author Charlene Shaw with Broom Barns Year 5 pupils Picture: JASON MARTIN.

A newly-published author revisited her former primary school to help inspire pupils to never give up on their dreams.

Charlene Shaw, an English teacher at Barnwell School in Stevenage, had her first book *Fall in Line* – a fictional novel about a corrupt education system – published in December. Last week, she visited Broom Barns Primary School in Stevenage, where she was once a pupil, for a 'meet the author' session. Charlene said: "It was a pleasure to return to my old

primary school to talk to Key Stage 2 students about my exciting journey since leaving more than 10 years ago. "It was so lovely to see so many students already able to tell me what they wanted to do when they grow up, and I'm so pleased I could share my own dreams to encourage them to achieve theirs." One pupil said: "I really enjoyed hearing about how she never gave up, no matter how many times she was rejected, and it makes me want to work hard at school."

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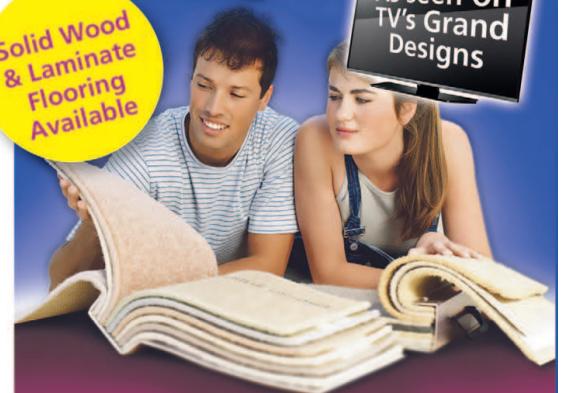
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