



Supporting the South Central Ambulance Service during the pandemic

South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SCAS) is one of ten ambulance trusts in England, proudly serving a population of seven million across the counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and most of Hampshire.

Our Make Ready teams have been working with NHS ambulance trusts across the UK for over ten years, ensuring that their ambulance fleets are prepared, cleaned, re-stocked and all equipment is working before every shift.

Services are tailored to each ambulance service's requirements, but typical methods deployed include highly specialised deep cleaning, infection control, medicine stock and device management, ambulance allocation and tracking, vehicle assessments and audits.

Rising to the challenges of the pandemic

No sector felt the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic more than our frontline healthcare services.



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Faced within unseasonal and unprecedented demand when the virus struck in earnest in March 2020, the National Health Service (NHS) faced a web of complex organisational, logistical and practical challenges to remain as operational as possible in the time since.

The Churchill team dedicated extra time and resource to support ambulance services up and down the country during the pandemic, including the South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) with our Make Ready division.

A major challenge to the NHS presented by the pandemic was a sheer increase in personnel demand. An obvious solution to cater to this increase was to hire more staff and expand the team supporting trusts such as SCAS – however, there were numerous challenges that meant we were heavily reliant on our current cohort of employees to absorb additional work and maintain an effective service.

Make Ready Operatives (MRO) must have a C1 addition to their driving license, which immediately limited recruiting options, while equally unprecedented demand for drivers in other sectors (such as ecommerce) stretched the labour market well beyond what we have seen in recent times. Meanwhile, because of COVID-19 safety protocols, some staff missed time through illness or isolation.

In order to maintain a 24-hour operation and keep SCAS moving, our employees gave their all. Account managers and training staff stepped up to the frontline to ensure demand was met, while other personnel were ready and willing to take on more hours and be moved around with little notice to cover shifts when isolation requirements continued to be triggered.

During periods of peak demand, we made our usual weekly and monthly meetings more frequent in order to tackle issues in real time and ensure continuity of service delivery. Communication on the ground was driven by ever-present MROs, while technical team leaders managed groups of MROs and assumed responsibility for making sure that the forecasted number of ambulances were turned around and fit for service.

Constant communication with SCAS was critical in navigating this difficult period.

Powered by technology

The pandemic also shone a light on how important technology was to boosting productivity and thus being able to go the extra mile in times of adversity.

In this case, our Mo:dus Make Ready app was critical during the COVID-19 crisis period. Designed specifically to address the challenges of the ambulance sector, its core rationale is to establish transparency, resilience, accuracy and insight in the workflows by digitising the different aspects of Make Ready delivery models, including that of SCAS. The digital process also significantly reduces the time for the Make Ready process.

All ambulances were tagged with a digital code linked to the Mo:dus platform. When scanned by a Make Ready Operative (MRO), all data relating to that ambulance was presented, such as which medicines needed to be replenished. This enabled our teams to check, remedy and log all supplies, internal and external damage, lights and sirens, cleanliness and more to ensure the vehicles were fit to leave the site. This process also acted as an audit as all data was stored and could be accessed whenever needed.



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We launched a Covid symptom tracker app on Mo:duS in May 2020. Our Make Ready teams used the app on a daily basis to record symptoms, access Government advice and isolate if necessary. This provided an extra layer of reassurance to SCAS that we were taking all possible steps to limit transmission and keep everyone safe.

We also worked closely with trusts in relation to data, especially live ambulance data, to enable us to forecast demand and workflows.

The results

Thanks to the dedication, organisation, collaborative nature and technical underpinning of our Make Ready operation with SCAS, we have negotiated the toughest of situations.

Since February 2020, we have completed 1,281 vehicle decontaminations, which represented an increase of 335% on our usual workload.

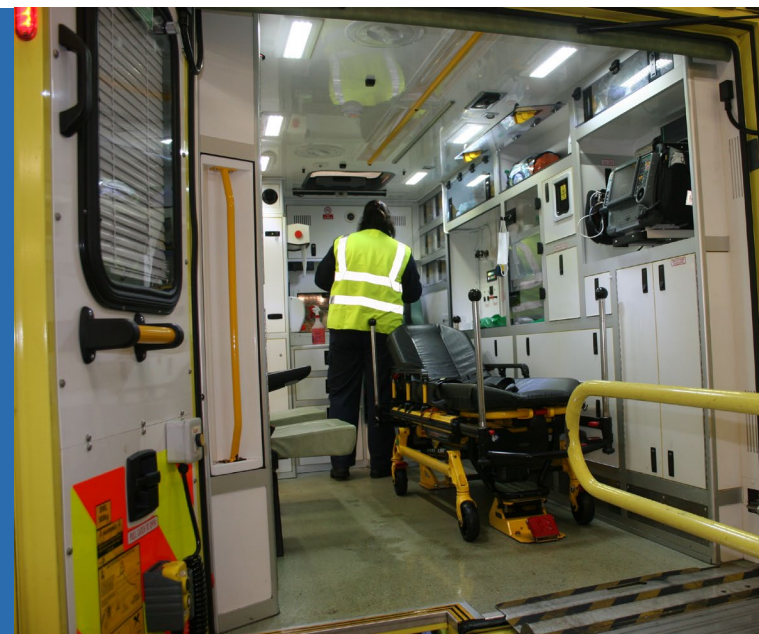
We also provided an additional 4,000 hours to assist with the extra work loads brought about by the pandemic, including additional vehicle packing requirements, PPE and decontamination of equipment.

The Churchill team received extremely warm and positive feedback from SCAS and other community stakeholders, including the Mayor of Portsmouth who recognised the team with certification and medals for their work.

We will continue to enhance, amend and improve our Make Ready services to ensure trusts such as the SCAS can cope with additional pressures.

“Your dedication, commitment, pride, professionalism and most importantly resilience have radiated through, even on the most challenging of days. Your support to our staff and our patients has been hugely appreciated and we want to ensure that you are properly thanked and recognised”.

Will Hancock
CEO of SCAS



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