

## **Faculty of Pre-Hospital Care – Facilitated Elective 2024**

I really enjoyed doing the FPHC facilitated elective with the Welsh Ambulance Service, based in Carmarthen for 5 weeks in May-June 2024.

One of the best things about the elective was the number of shifts I was able to do over the 5 weeks. I was scheduled for approximately 40 hours a week of shifts, with opportunities to spend time with other emergency services as well. This meant I gained lots of clinical experience during the elective.

The majority of my time was spent on ambulance shifts, primarily based in Carmarthen but also doing shifts from Llanelli as well. These were either in the ambulances or rapid response cars. We attended a variety of different call-outs ranging from injuries and accidents to medical issues. The days were very variable, sometimes there would be lots of jobs and attending jobs back-to-back, whereas other days might have only one call-out or none. I got to see firsthand the impact of delays in finding patients beds in A&E, as we often had to wait many hours outside the hospital before being able to handover.

My favourite shifts were with the CHARU cars which respond to high acuity calls. In the CHARU cars we attended jobs including cardiac arrests, trauma calls ranging from road traffic collisions to falls from height, head injuries and major haemorrhages. I also spent time with the advanced paramedic practitioners who are able to provide more interventions such as antibiotics and other medications, to try and minimise hospital admissions. As part of my 5 week elective I also attended some of the mandatory training happening locally; one of these was an annual update course which included some airway skills practice and simulation, the other was a community PROMPT course (Practical Obstetric Multi-Professional training) which covered managing pre-hospital obstetric emergencies.

The area we could respond to call-outs in was large, across Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, also sometimes going to call-outs in Swansea depending on resources. This highlighted to me the challenges of providing ambulance services to such a large, mostly rural area. On one occasion we were asked to attend a red call for a paediatric major haemorrhage and were the closest resource with an ETA of 30 minutes. That 30 minutes felt like a very long journey given the severity of the call. Fortunately, a local GP had been able to attend and was on scene providing care when we arrived. With often relatively long journey times to the nearest hospital, EMRTS, the Welsh Air Ambulance service, are an incredibly valuable resource. EMRTS joined us on quite a few of the jobs I attended during the 5 weeks, and we also did some transfers of the team and their patient from the local helicopter landing site to the hospital. They were kind enough to show me around their helicopter and talk me through their kit during a pause between jobs, which was an amazing opportunity.

As part of my elective I was keen to understand more about the work of other emergency services. The RNLI crew at St David's lifeboat station kindly invited me to attend one of their open days and experience the launch of their all-weather Tamar class lifeboat. The St David's lifeboat station is an amazing facility, and their main lifeboat is also very impressive, with capacity for 118 survivors on-board. It was an incredible opportunity to experience the launch and observe the rescue drills and technology from on-board the boat. I was also allowed to drive the lifeboat for a short bit of the route which was a great experience.

I contacted Western Beacons Mountain Rescue to see if they would be happy to have me observe some of their training and they generously said I could come along to one of their weekend training events and take part. It was a fantastic opportunity to learn from the team members and understand more about the work of Mountain Rescue. On the Saturday we did a hill day, practicing navigation and talking about kit, communication and weather. In the evening we did some team-building exercises. On the Sunday we went to one of the local quarries to learn more about crag rescue and

the kit used, as well as practicing some knot tying. Thank you so much to everyone on the Western Beacons Team for making me feel so welcome on the weekend, and particularly to Francis Beynon, the medical officer, for facilitating me attending the weekend.

I was able to do an observer shift with the local Hazardous Area Response Team (HART) which was a unique opportunity to see the kit they use and their training facility. We had a range of call-outs during the day, including to a suspected drowning which we were stood down from, some local red calls, and a penetrating abdominal injury. I also observed some of the training in Powered Respirator Protective suits which showed how challenging communication and fine motor tasks can be with that PPE. Thank you so much to the team for welcoming me to the base for the day.

Aside from the medical part of my elective, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire are beautiful areas of Wales, and having beaches and the Bannau Brycheiniog close by was amazing. I really enjoyed making the most of them during my time off.

At the end of the elective I went to Edinburgh as a student supporter for the Faculty of Pre-Hospital Care exams. It was a valuable opportunity to see how the diploma and fellowship exams work, and the type of content assessed. It was also great to meet lots of other students, paramedics and junior doctors interested in pre-hospital care.

Thank you so much to the Faculty of Pre-Hospital Care for this elective opportunity. The elective was a valuable insight into pre-hospital emergency medicine, and a unique experience. Thank you so much to all the people who I worked with on my elective, it was a wonderful experience. Particular thanks to Carmarthen Ambulance station where I was based, and Steve Bowles for being my elective supervisor.

