

Board of Directors (in Public)
25 September 2025



Report Title	Annual EPRR Report 2025	
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Accountable Director	Nick Smith, Chief Operating Officer	
Previous committees/groups	None	
Recommended action(s)	Assurance	
Purpose of the paper	Assurance	
Executive Summary		
<p>The attached report aims to meet two requirements of the NHS: firstly, that annual a report to the Board publicly states its readiness and preparedness activity and, secondly, that the Board is satisfied that the organisation has sufficient resources to discharge its EPRR (emergency preparedness, resilience and response) duties.</p> <p>The report sets out the key EPRR risks, work undertaken on developing plans, training and exercises undertaken, incidents managed, business continuity accreditation, HART (Hazardous Area Response Team) and SORT (Special Operations Response Team) performance, and work undertaken on continuous improvement, during 2024/25.</p> <p>The report also provides an update on work undertaken in respect of the Manchester Arena Inquiry recommendations. While funding bids to commissioners were unsuccessful, there have been significant made as a result of this work, albeit some gaps remain.</p> <p>The EPRR Core Standards were assessed as Substantially Compliance last year. Although at the time of writing the self-assessment for 2025 has not been completed, the EPRR team are expecting to this process to result in the assessment remaining at over 90% compliance, which will be Substantially Compliant.</p>		
Recommendation(s)	To note the report.	
Link to Board Assurance Framework Risks (board and level 2 committees only)	5. Develop and maintain effective emergency preparedness, resilience, and response arrangements.	

ANNUAL EPRR REPORT 2025

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 NHS England Core Standards for EPRR (emergency preparedness, resilience and response) set out requirements for all NHS organisations. The detail of this work is overseen by the Trust's Resilience Governance Group, but one of the specific requirements is for the Accountable Officer to provide EPRR reports to the Board, no less than annually and that the "organisation publicly states its readiness and preparedness activities in annual reports within the organisation's own regulatory reporting requirements". Another requirement is that "The Board / Governing Body is satisfied that the organisation has sufficient and appropriate resource to ensure it can fully discharge its EPRR duties". This paper aims to meet both of those requirements for the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

2. EPRR RISKS

- 2.1 Nationally, the most serious risks facing the UK are identified by the Government and published in the National Risk Register¹. The national risks are then assessed locally by each local resilience forum (LRF) to identify those that may impact that area (there are four LRFs in the Yorkshire region). These risks together form a Community Risk Register for each area. Under the CCA 2004, it is a statutory duty to publish all or part of the community risk register, where such information would allow members of the public to mitigate the consequences of particular risks. The EPRR team routinely consider these risks to ensure that there are sufficient plans in place to mitigate these risks.
- 2.2 There are also more local risks that are specific to YAS. These are managed using the Trust's risk management system. Risks are raised and recorded on Datix and when they meet a certain risk score, they are escalated to the Corporate Risk Register. The EPRR risks that were on the Corporate Risk Register in 2023/23 are set out in table 1 below.

Risk Description	Risk score 31 March '24	Risk score 31 March '25	Comments
Resilience Support Team Quantity and Capability	8	6	Improved processes reduced risk
Initial Operational Response (IOR) Training	9	4	Training roll-out reduced risk
Storage facilities at Manor Mill for HART	6	N/A	Closed September 2024
Major Incident Capability	15	15	Related to Manchester Arena Inquiry recommendations

¹ [National Risk Register - 2025 edition](#)

Major Incident Exercising	12	12	Related to Manchester Arena Inquiry recommendations
Continuous Improvement (incidents and exercises)	12	9	Work ongoing to embed a new debrief process and learning culture.
National HART training courses	20	12	Change of NARU governance and premises leading to reduction in course availability.
Maintenance of ISO 22301 Business Continuity certification	4	4	Ongoing maintenance of business continuity arrangements aligned to the ISO 22301 annual audit.

Table 1: EPRR Risks on Corporate Risk Register 2024/25

3. EPRR AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS PLANS

3.1 All EPRR and Special Operations policies, plans, and procedures are reviewed once every one or two years. All those that were due in 2024/25 were reviewed during the year. However, several policies or plans were new or underwent significant changes. These are set out below:

- Major Incident Plan: reviewed in line with learning from Manchester Arena incident.
- Pandemic Pathogen Plan: new plan co-authored by EPRR and Infection, Prevention and Control. The plan incorporates learning from COVID.
- Firearms Deployment Standard Operating Procedure – new document to ensure a consistent approach when responding in support of the Police to pre-planned firearms incidents.

4. EPRR TRAINING & TRAINING COMPLIANCE

4.1 Throughout 2024/25, the Command and Resilience Education (CARE) team delivered EPRR and Special Operations training to staff which undertake command, control and operational response. Table 2 below shows the number of staff which have completed the relevant training and the method of delivery.

Course	Completions	Method
CBRN (Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear) Commander	192	Classroom
CBRN Tactical Command	2	External
Commander Foundation	46	Classroom
Initial Operational Response v2 (CBRN)	4135	eLearning
JESIP Awareness (multi agency working)	3993	eLearning
JESIP Commander	97	Classroom
Major Incident & Special Operations	688	Classroom
Major Incident Response	3847	eLearning
MTA (Marauding Terrorist Attack) Commander	119	Classroom

MTA Commander Refresher	324	Classroom
MTA Awareness	4098	eLearning
Multi Agency Gold Incident Command	5	External
Operational Commander	17	External
SORT Initial Training	224	Classroom
SORT Refresher Training	200	Classroom
Tactical Command	18	External
TST and MITT (new triage tools - one off course)	909	eLearning
Total No of Delegate Sessions	18914	

Table 2: Command and Major Incident Courses 2024/25

4.2 In 2024/25 there were five courses that all commanders were required to undertake. These were:

- Commander Foundation
- Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN)
- Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA)
- Major Incident and Special Operations (MISO)
- JESIP (multi-agency interoperability)

4.3 From April 2025 the first four of the courses set out in 4.2 above have been amalgamated into an annual mandated 4-day commander course. Based on current levels of attendance during the first few months, it is projected that at least 90% of commanders will show as fully compliant with by 31 March 2026.

4.4 The purchase of a high-fidelity simulation command training tool has allowed commanders to realistically experience being in a command role at an incident in a training environment. This is particularly useful for new commanders whose previous experience of day-to-day ambulance deployments did not usually expose them to a command environment. This tool is now used on the fourth day of the commander course to assess and provide supportive feedback to delegates.

5. EXERCISES

5.1 YAS have engaged with a total of 33 exercises, covering a wide range of scenarios. A focus across all Yorkshire and Humber partners in relation to exercise planning has been the embedding of learning from the Manchester Arena Inquiry recommendations. All exercises were supported with YAS players and umpires to ensure organisational and multi-agency learning was obtained.

5.2 The number of exercises undertaken during 2024/25, and the scenario and format of each, can be found in table 3 below.

Exercise Scenario	Format	Number of exercises
Adverse Weather	Tabletop	1

Chemical Biological Radiation Nuclear (CBRN)	Live	2
Control Of Major Accidents Hazards (COMAH)	Tabletop and live	8
Counter Terrorism	Tabletop	2
Evacuation	Live	4
High Consequence Infectious Disease	Tabletop	1
Local Resilience Forum	Tabletop	2
Major Incident	Tabletop and live	3
Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA)	Tabletop and live	6
National Fuel Shortage	Tabletop	1
Prison	Live	1
Public Order	Tabletop and live	2

Table 3: Exercises 2024/25

6. BUSINESS CONTINUITY UPDATE

- 6.1 In March 2025 the ISO22301 recertification audit took place over six days with two auditors, and once again the Trust retained its certification. This is the eleventh anniversary of the first certification to the standard. YAS remains the only statutory ambulance service and one of a handful of NHS organisations to have achieved this. The audit identified one minor non-conformity and some opportunities for improvement, all of which are being monitored at RGG.
- 6.2 As part of its certification to the ISO22301 standard the Trust is required to have an internal audit. Last year the audit took place on the 9th October 2024 and the audit focussed on Clause 9 (performance evaluation) and Clause 10 (improvement) of the ISO22301 standard. There was only one minor recommendation, which is being actioned. The next audit is scheduled for October 2025.
- 6.3 Each year every department undertakes a business continuity exercise to validate their plans. Exercise Blue Canary was designed to simulate the global CrowdStrike ICT outage seen earlier in the year, with the objective of assessing how YAS would be impacted and respond had it been affected by the CrowdStrike outage. This exercise was rolled out at the BC leads day in October 2024. Almost all departments were represented at the exercise giving 94% compliance. Departments were then required to undertake the exercise within their own teams. Most departments completed this exercise, giving 90% compliance. These exercises are in addition to the ones set out in the table in 5.2 above.
- 6.4 The current contract for the ISO audit runs until January 2027. This will provide a natural opportunity to review both the contractual arrangements and the scope of the current Business Continuity Management System.

7. OPERATIONAL AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY INCIDENTS

7.1 Significant or notable incidents from 2024/25 are set out below, including some of the key features of each:

- Major incident declaration for A1M minibus crash, 13 April 2024
 - 17 patients all transported to hospitals across our region.
 - A full YAS command structure was established, with excellent communication between the scene and the Health Cell at YAS HQ.
- ICT Network outage 28 June 2024
 - Issue affected systems across the Trust including Adastra, Pulse and Pilot. Cause was identified as server patches not being up to date. BC fallback processes used, including national contingency for IUC.
- Harehills public disorder, 18 July 2024
 - Public disorder occurred in the Harehills area of Leeds. This raised significant lessons in relation to the operational response to these types of incidents.
- Hull public disorder, 3 - 4 August 2024
 - Outbreaks of public disorder occurred in Hull City Centre.
 - Multi-agency engagement and co-location in place.
- Holiday Inn, Rotherham public disorder, 4 August 2024
 - Prolonged incident that attracted national media attention
 - Police major incident declared.
 - Post incident, a new Public Order SOP was produced.
 - Work continues with partner agencies to test and exercise the multi-agency response to these types of incidents.
- Thirsk Ambulance Station damage on 7 December 2024
 - High winds during Storm Darragh led to a tree falling onto the station causing significant damage. Ambulance station business continuity (BC) plan implemented. Staff, vehicles and controlled drugs moved to fallback locations. No injuries or impact to service delivery.
- Adastra outage on 2 January 2025 affecting IUC
 - National outage of Adastra system, incident managed well using a new BC App designed in house following previous outages. This gave significant improvements in management of the incident and subsequent incident recovery.
- Prolonged siege, Sheffield City Centre, 10 – 11 February 2025
 - YAS utilised a team mix of HART and SORT to accommodate the presence required on scene.
 - Handover and longevity of command was identified as a lesson.

8. HAZARDOUS AREA RESPONSE TEAM

- 8.1 Hazardous Area Response Teams, more commonly known as HART, are comprised of specially recruited personnel who are trained and equipped to provide the ambulance response to high-risk and complex emergency situations. YAS has one HART team based in Leeds to cover the region.
- 8.2 For 2024-2025 HART there were a total of 4,380 shifts. Only 27 shifts did not have the required minimum staffing, resulting in overall availability of 99.4%. This was a decrease from 99.7% availability the previous year.
- 8.3 Following a national review, there was an uplift in HART funding, and the teams are currently in the process of increasing from teams of seven to teams of eight, increasing the total HART team staffing from 49 to 56. As well as further increasing the availability, this increases the number of shifts that a HART Specialist Paramedic can be released into A&E Operations to support patient care in the community.
- 8.4 HART were allocated to 2,439 incidents in 2024/25, which is an average of 203 per month and have arrived at 1,394 of these. HART attend 17 categories of incidents
- 8.5 To give a sense of the type of incidents HART attend, some incidents of note are set out below:
- Siege incident, Leeds, 9 June 2024
 - An individual had barricaded himself into a house. HART worked with CTSFO's to support. Advanced clinical skills were required during the operation. The incident lasted 9 hours.
 - Water Incident, 10 July 2024
 - A male entered the water in Knottingley in West Yorkshire. This resulted in a widespread multi-agency search whereby HART deployed into the water in boats. A debrief was held, which led to contact with the Police Dive Team who presented a session on their capabilities at the HART clinical governance day.
 - Possible Individual Chemical Exposure incident Howarth, 3 January 2025
 - HART deployed to an incident due to reports of possible suicide using chemicals. HART deployed into the caravan in Breathing Apparatus to recognise life extinct on the patient.
 - Support to Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team at Ripon North Yorkshire, 24 March 2025
 - HART deployed to provide clinical support to the Royal Navy who were involved in disarming a WW2 bomb in a canal, the incident lasted 4 days with HART support throughout.

9. SPECIAL OPERATIONS RESPONSE TEAM

- 9.1 The Special Operations Response Team (SORT) are frontline staff who receive additional training to support complex emergencies. This training covers responding to marauding terrorist attacks and incidents involving CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear risks).
- 9.2 NHS England EPRR Interoperable Capability standards require a fully trained and compliant SORT establishment of 290 operatives across the Trust. 35 SORT operatives must be available to respond to an incident between the hours 06:00 and 02:00, 365 days per year.
- 9.3 At the end of March 2025 there were 150 SORT staff who were fully compliant. The SORT daily figures are reported twice a day, and during 2024/25 there were 30 occasions where the Trust dropped below 35, resulting in full availability of 96%. A Special Operations manager is in post and whose focus is on developing and delivering the Trust's SORT capability.
- 9.4 SORT operatives are required to complete seven days of dedicated SORT training per year. This is split into a 5-day course and a 2-day refresher. The Command and Resilience Education Team (CARE) deliver the SORT training. Throughout 2024/25 CARE plans to deliver 24 x 5-day and 24 x 2-day SORT courses to meet this demand.
- 9.5 During the year SORT staff have taken part in a number of CBRN exercises. They have assisted with an exercise at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary which provided support to the Acute Trust in testing their CBRN capability on-site following response to contaminated patients self-presenting into the Emergency department. Several counter-terrorism exercises also took place which included SORT. These were all evening exercises which were held at The Deep in Hull and Leeds Railway Station.
- 9.6 In August 2024 SORT were utilised to provide medical cover over a number of days at a climate camp that occurred at a large power station within the region in addition to supporting West Yorkshire police on bonfire night based on historic incidents within the region.
- 9.7 The nationally mandated (and funded) arrangements for SORT brings challenges in the use of the staff at incidents. This is primarily due to the need to release them from the day-to-day operational and clinical duties, which then has an adverse effect on resource availability. Work is underway to consider how better to utilise these dedicated and trained staff, for example at pre-planned events or operations.

10. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT (LEARNING FROM INCIDENTS AND EXERCISES)

- 10.1 Throughout the year, YAS have been utilising the learning system which enables the capture of lessons from exercises and incidents, identify recommendations, assign actions, and track completion status. This continuous improvement process allows for the learning cycle to be achieved and has been incorporated into a revised debrief policy. Learning and notable practice is shared throughout the trust and overseen by the Resilience Governance Group and an overview reported to the Patient Safety Learning Group twice yearly.
- 10.2 Significant learning has been identified from the incidents outlined above, as well as some of the large exercises. Learning outcomes from incidents in previous years, the Manchester Arena Inquiry report and other public inquiries, are also being tracked through the system. Some key themes emerging from these lessons are:
- Multi agency command at a Forward Command Post. Although JESIP is well embedded generally, there are still occasional lapses in practice, particularly around co-location.
 - Airwave talk group utilisation and radio discipline reoccurs as a lesson during incident response. Work is going with the EOC Incident Command Desk to address.
- 10.3 As well as areas for improvement, YAS have seen significant positive changes in relation to consistent deployment of specialist resources, through the newly established EOC Incident Command Desk.

11. MANCHESTER ARENA INQUIRY

- 11.1 Of the 149 Manchester Arena Inquiry Volume 2 report recommendations, 84 of those have been assessed² as being directly relevant to ambulance trusts. As reported to Trust Board last year, progress has been good on those that are within the ability of the Trust to deliver without additional funding, while many of the outstanding recommendations are awaiting progress at a national level.
- 11.2 A funding bid was submitted to the Commissioners following a review of the Trust's capability to respond to a mass casualty incident, as recommended by the Inquiry (recommendations 105 and 106) at the end of 2023. Funding for that was not approved, however significant work has been undertaken to find alternative solutions and improvements have been made. There are a small number of gaps in provision, and consequent risks, that remain. Due to the security implications, the details of these can be provided separately to Board members if required.

² This assessment combines a previous internal assessment with one undertaken by a national group.

- 11.3 Some of the improvements that have been made to meet the findings of the review include a refreshed incident command course, the introduction of high-fidelity (virtual reality) exercises for commanders, the implementation of the road-based MERIT team, and the new EOC Incident Command Desk. The mass communication tool, currently being procured, will also contribute towards improving the response to major incidents.

12. CORE STANDARDS UPDATE

- 12.1 The self-assessment for the NHS England EPRR Core Standards in autumn 2024 resulted in an overall assessment being of 93.1% for 2024/25, which is **Substantially Compliant**. This score remained unchanged after the check and challenge process, which for the Trust was undertaken by West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board.
- 12.2 Two of the partially compliant areas within the standards relate to Incident Response and Mass Casualty arrangements. They are assessed as partially compliant due to the gaps and risks identified following a review undertaken as a result of the Manchester Arena Inquiry recommendation, as set out in 11.2 above.
- 12.3 The next self-assessment is due to be submitted in autumn 2025. This needs to be submitted to West Yorkshire ICB in September, prior a peer review process. The final submission needs to be with the ICB by 31 October 2025. Although at the time of writing the self-assessment has not been completed, it is expected to be over 90% and therefore Substantially Compliant.
- 12.4 A national review of the standards appears to have been pushed back again for another year. However, there is also a national review of the specialist capabilities, including HART and command, which is expected in 2026. This suggests that substantial changes to the core standards are unlikely before 2027.

13. EPRR RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

- 13.1 An assessment has been undertaken of the EPRR resources and accepted by the Chief Operating Officer in his role as Accountable Emergency Officer. Based on the ability to meet the core and interoperable capabilities standards prior to the Manchester Arena Inquiry recommendations, the level of resourcing was sufficient for the Trust to achieve substantial compliance last year and is likely to do the same again this year. However, as set out the Manchester Arena Inquiry funding bid, additional resources are required to fully meet the standards and expectations. It is worth noting that resource requirements could change as learning emerges from other incidents in the UK and further afield, as well as from any changes to national capabilities or core standards.

- 13.2 Based on the current resources, the focus for 2025/26 is to meet the current core and interoperable standards, as well as taking forward the remaining work to meet the Manchester Arena Inquiry recommendations, as far as funding allows.

Owen Hayward
Head of EPRR and Special Operations
19 August 2025