

## CASE STUDY

East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust



### Delivering Better Non-Emergency Services

East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust provides vital, non-emergency services (Patient Transport Services) to the community and, last year alone, 721,000 patient journeys to and from treatment centres and hospitals were undertaken. The rural nature and sheer size of the area that the Trust covers - over 5,000 square miles - means that fleet reliability is a key component in ensuring that the services it provides reach those who most need support. In addition, as funding moves from hospital trusts to Primary Care Trusts over the next few years, the Trust will have to respond to an increasing focus on community patient care. This will place an even greater emphasis on the timely and efficient operation of East of England's fleet service.

In order to deliver the most effective service to this diverse region and prepare the organisation to meet forthcoming legislation changes, the Trust is about to build 20 high-dependency vehicles. These will be wholly provided under a contract hire scheme. A few years ago the organisation took the decision to appoint a fleet specialist as it could see sound operational and financial benefits if it focused on its core competencies rather than fleet management. When the organisation decided to review contracts in 2004, Venson was invited to tender for the business alongside the Trust's incumbent provider.

### A First-Class Patient Care Service for the East of England

East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust provides emergency and non-emergency transport services as part of the NHS team to the East of England. The Trust was formed in 1994 by amalgamating the Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk Ambulance Services and is now a key provider of reliable patient care services to the population of these three counties. Over the years, the Trust has worked hard to considerably improve its all-important emergency response time performance and is proud that it has consistently achieved excellent Category A (life-threatening) response times.

In order to provide a first-class service to its patients, the Trust operates a fleet of 110 non-emergency vehicles and has outsourced the contract hire, maintenance and management of these vehicles to fleet specialists, Venson. By entering into a partnership with Venson, the Trust has been able to provide a reliable, 'always-on' patient service, which has delivered significant cost-benefits to the organisation.



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Adrian Matthews, Director of Non-emergency Services at East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust comments:

“Our high-dependency patient vehicles provide a vital service to the community. We have to be highly sensitive to patient needs and it is therefore extremely important that our vehicles meet exacting Health and Safety standards. In addition, if a vehicle breaks down, we need an immediate response service in order to get it (and its patients) back on the road in the shortest time possible.

About a year ago, we decided to review our existing supplier and we put the contract out to tender. Venson offered a very attractive package, in terms of finance, support and emergency services expertise. Our call centre sits at the heart of our business and we were very impressed with Venson’s dedicated telephone response team, which we likened to our own emergency service response centre. In addition, we were extremely impressed with Venson’s knowledge, experience and proven track record in the emergency sector.”

### **Working with Specialists to Achieve Best Value For Patients**

Venson’s specialist knowledge about the needs, pressures and performance criteria of the emergency services sector, gave the Trust the confidence to award them the contract.

Reliable, timely maintenance and repair was a key selection criterion, as the Trust has to respond to around 3,500 non-emergency calls per day. In addition, Venson’s comprehensive equip-for-service capability was another important consideration, as the Trust’s vehicles need to be properly kitted out to provide essential support to patients during journeys.

Today, Venson provides the Trust with a bespoke contract hire service, which includes maintenance. In addition, Venson maintains the Trust’s purchase vehicles and provides procurement advice and direct driver services. The contract with Venson includes:

- Vehicle procurement, equip-for-service and disposal
- Mechanical and accident repair and maintenance services
- Contract hire
- Comprehensive fleet management
- 24/7/365 vehicle response services
- Inspections, servicing, MOTs and a specialist collection & delivery facility.

Venson provides a dedicated team who respond quickly to each and every call from the Trust’s non-emergency crews. Adrian Matthews, who has likened the service that Venson provides to that of the Trust’s own emergency call response team, says:

“Our patients are our top priority and Venson has been hugely supportive in understanding our needs. They act first and question later, whether it’s an accident or a breakdown. Quite simply, that means our crews get a first class response service and we fulfil on our patient care promise. We are delighted to be working with such a responsive and effective team.”