

CAPITA

North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust



July 2006 saw the establishment of the North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust following the merger of ambulance services in Greater Manchester, Cumbria, Merseyside and Lancashire. This reconfiguration prompted the Trust to consider wider opportunities for joint working, and as a result Capita were engaged to undertake an appraisal of the existing communications/control centre and provide recommendations for future service delivery.

Our approach was based on a methodology applied widely to NHS option appraisals known as Multi Attribute Utility Analysis. We've used this approach a number of times, specifically with option appraisals of ambulance services in the UK and New Zealand, and it is particularly appropriate in situations where there may be clinical risk implications and/or a degree of challenge to the findings.

To deliver this process we formed a working group made up of members of the senior management teams from the four Trusts and facilitated a series of four half-day workshops, the objectives of which were to:

- agree key service objectives
- develop service delivery options
- develop assessment criteria
- create the options brief.

We also conducted a non-financial appraisal where the views of senior management, union representatives, ambulance dispatchers, and ambulance crews from across the four counties were represented.

The result was a clear recommendation for the development of communications infrastructure and processes across the Trust based on stepped level of risk appetite. The ability of this approach to derive both an objective decision – a necessity for safety-critical systems such as these, and to establish a consensus across a wide range of stakeholders is a real achievement, and particularly valuable in the NHS environment.