

Faculty of Pre-Hospital Care HEMS Elective Report 2025

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This spring I had the privilege of completing a four week elective with The Air Ambulance Service (TAAS) and West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS). As a medical student who has always been interested in Emergency Medicine and Trauma, this was like a dream come true, however nerve wracking at first! Having never been in a helicopter before or done much pre-hospital medicine prior to this it was daunting at first to say the least. However, the team at TAAS and those at WMAS were all super welcoming and I felt at ease immediately. I was given a tour of the helicopter base and tea and cakes were offered – so a good start all round really!

To start my placement, I did two 12 hour observer shifts with WMAS with a standard double crew ambulance (DCA). This was a great introduction to the real day to day workings of pre-hospital clinicians. We went to a variety of call outs, ranging from chest pain, persistent vomiting, loss of consciousness to a cardiac arrest and a road traffic accident. It was a great opportunity to learn more from the paramedics about their skill set, their role in prehospital care and all the kit they have in the back of the ambulance. I also had the opportunity to spend a day in the ambulance call centre, seeing how the 'behind the scenes' work took place – dispatch teams, allocating resources, and those who answer the 999 calls themselves.



This was a great insight into what is such a crucial cog in the prehospital machine but is not a visible to an outsider. Lastly, that fortnight I spent 2 shifts with the WMAS MERIT team – a duo of a doctor and a critical care paramedic who attended via car, more serious incidents in the West Midlands. This was a brilliant experience as I really felt part of the close-knit team, and I was able to ask the clinicians any



questions I had between cases. We attended a range of cases including adults and paediatrics including RTCs, assaults, and a house fire.

After this fortnight I then spent the rest of my time with the HEMS team at TAAS. This included day shifts on the helicopter and night shifts in the critical care car. We went to lots of different call outs over my time there, including cardiac arrests, RTCs, a birth, traumatic injuries and more. On every call out I learned something

different. It was amazing to see how the critical care paramedics and the pre-hospital doctor worked together, their different skill sets and the knowledge and experience they brought to the scene. Every member of the team was hugely welcoming towards me, involved me whenever they could and talked me through their decision making either during or after the call out. I learnt how the specialist equipment worked, such as the ventilator, and about the process of giving blood in the pre-hospital environment. Working with the team at TAAS was truly a pleasure, every member of the team was friendly and happy to have me along for the ride, from the pilots to the staff at the base and everyone in between. I also had the opportunity to attend some of their learning and development days and be involved in a major incident simulation which was lots of fun and very interesting to see how services such as TAAS fit into the bigger picture of service provision during major incidents of mass casualty events.

Overall, this elective placement was incredible, I learnt so much about pre-hospital medicine, met so many amazing people and it has truly inspired me to pursue a career in prehospital medicine in the future. I am so grateful to all the wonderful people at TAAS and WMAS who took me under their wing for the placement and particularly to Dr Caroline Leech for organising and overseeing the placement itself. It truly was a fantastic opportunity, and I feel so fortunate to have been able to have these experiences as a medical student.

