

Ambulance turnaround times at hospitals soar

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The time it takes for ambulances to drop patients off at hospital and return to the road is increasing, new research has revealed.

In 2016, 20 ambulances a day recorded turnaround times of more than one hour when dropping emergency patients off at hospital.

But by this year, that had more than doubled to 43 a day, according to the Freedom of Information request by the Scottish Conservatives.

Ambulance bosses, who have a target of 20 minutes for each turnaround, have long been concerned about the time it takes for vehicles to drop patients off and get back on the road.

In that time, paramedics are expected to hand patients over, fill in forms and then clean the vehicle in preparation for other patients.

In 2016 there were 7215 cases where a turnaround took more than an hour, which then rose to 9934 the year later, and 13,010 in 2018.

In the first nine months of 2019, there had already been 11,730, meaning this year is on course to be significantly higher again.

The crisis-hit Queen Elizabeth hospital in Glasgow had the most lengthy turnarounds, with 16,162 incidents where turnaround was longer than an hour in the past four years.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“Paramedics are among our most dedicated and hard-working public servants.

“But clearly there are more and more obstacles being placed in their way, and that’s having an impact on patient safety too.

“It’s clearly stated that turnaround times should be around 20 minutes, but the hospitals they are going to just aren’t set up to make that happen.

“The last thing ambulance workers want is to be hanging around a hospital when they could be out on the roads responding to emergencies.

“Performance in this has slipped on the SNP government’s watch, and it’s up to Nicola Sturgeon to sort this out if she’s serious about improving the NHS.”