

# Freewheelers

## Emergency Volunteer Service



## 2005 Annual Report

John Woodgate  
Secretary, Freewheelers EVS  
January 2006

## Management Summary

Freewheelers Emergency Volunteer Service, or Freewheelers for short, is one of several similarly named but independent registered charities which provide a free emergency out-of-hours courier service for the NHS, transporting blood, samples, drugs, scans, medical notes, and other items on specially equipped motorcycles. This service is provided to NHS hospitals mainly in the Avon and Somerset Health Authority areas including hospitals in Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare, Taunton, and outlying areas. Occasional trips have also been made to more distant hospitals for which a small mileage charge is made to cover our direct costs.

The charity needs to raise at least £16,000 per year to sustain this commitment to the hospitals and receives no funding directly or indirectly from the NHS or the Lottery. In the last financial year we raised over £17,500 most of which came from donations of £9,300 and collections of £6,300 at events in the area.

There was a significant increase of 44% in the total number of calls received, with noticeably more classified as Urgent (33% Vs 22% last year) and less non-urgent (63% Vs 73%), with Emergency calls constant at around 4%. Pickups from Musgrove Park Hospital were down 2%, and from Royal United Hospital, Bath were up 3%, with a significant increase in deliveries to North Bristol NHS Trust hospitals. This reached 33% of all calls in December. In terms of items carried, there was a 4% increase in the amount of equipment carried, and a corresponding 6% drop in packages carried.

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## Introduction

This document is primarily intended to provide information on our service. It is hoped that you will find it both useful and relevant. Included is some background on how the charity is organised and operates together with a statistical breakdown of all the calls received in 2005, including breakdowns by month, item carried and sites collected from and delivered to. If you have any further queries please get in touch through the contact details at the end of the document.

## Background

Freewheelers Emergency Volunteer Service, or Freewheelers for short, is one of several similarly named but independent registered charities which provide a free emergency out-of-hours courier service for the NHS, transporting blood, samples drugs, scans, medical notes, and other items on specially equipped motorcycles.

## **What Are The Aims Of The Charity?**

The stated aims of the charity are three-fold:

- To provide an emergency out of hours courier service to transport items of a medical nature to NHS hospitals in the Somerset, Bristol and Bath Areas.
- To encourage safe riding practices both within and without the group.
- To promote a positive image of motorcycling to the general public.

## **Who Is The Service Aimed At?**

This service is provided to NHS hospitals mainly in the Avon and Somerset Health Authority areas including hospitals in Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare, Taunton, and outlying areas. Occasional trips have also been made to more distant hospitals such as Cheltenham, Gloucester and Bridgend. For longer distances such as London, Birmingham, Plymouth or Preston, a small mileage charge is made to cover our direct costs. The alternative would be for hospitals to pay taxi or courier companies to make these deliveries.

## **How is The Charity Funded?**

The charity needs to raise at least £16,000 per year to sustain this commitment to the hospitals and receives no funding directly or indirectly from the NHS or the Lottery. Every penny raised or donated goes to the charity with less than 1% being spent on administration and fund raising. In the last financial year we raised over £17,500 with donations and collections of £9,300 and £6,300 respectively.

Keeping four bikes on the road, in a safe condition, is expensive and over the last two years we have seen our fuel costs rise by 24% to nearly £500 per month. We are very grateful, therefore, to have received sponsorship on our fuel from BWOC for the next 6 months. We fully appreciate the kindness and generosity of each of our supporters and friends.

## How Is The Charity Organised?

The charity is run by volunteers; the riders are all dedicated motorcyclists who have achieved an advanced motorcycling qualification such as the IAM, RoSPA, or the BMF Blue Riband. We work hard to deliver a professional service and to promote a positive image of motorcycling to the general public.

## How Is The Service Provided?

The Charity currently runs three motorcycles (plus a reserve) with one based in Somerset, one based in Bristol and the third machine based in Bath. All machines are Honda Pan European's fitted with blue lights and sirens so that items that are classified as an Emergency can be delivered safely and quickly. This enables riders to make safe progress through congested traffic more effectively than any alternatives.



Riders are all trained volunteers who are on call outside normal working hours between 7pm and 7am Monday to Thursday and all weekend from 7pm on Fridays through to 7am on Mondays, and all Bank Holidays. About 5% of the calls received are classified as Emergency, where the urgent delivery of the item will reduce risk to a patient's life. This has been agreed with Avon and Somerset traffic police as justifying the use of blue lights and sirens to facilitate our safe progress.

Calls are received by a duty Coordinator on the charity's 07050 on-call number who takes the details of the call and then assigns the call to the appropriate rider. The Charity operates in a professional manner and uses a system of job cards (completed by the rider) and record sheets (completed by the Coordinator) in order to track what is carried; the pick-up location; the delivery location; who the rider is and the time the call was received. In addition, whenever the items being carried change hands the job card records who signed for it and at what time. The record sheet additionally records who placed the call and the relevant contact details.

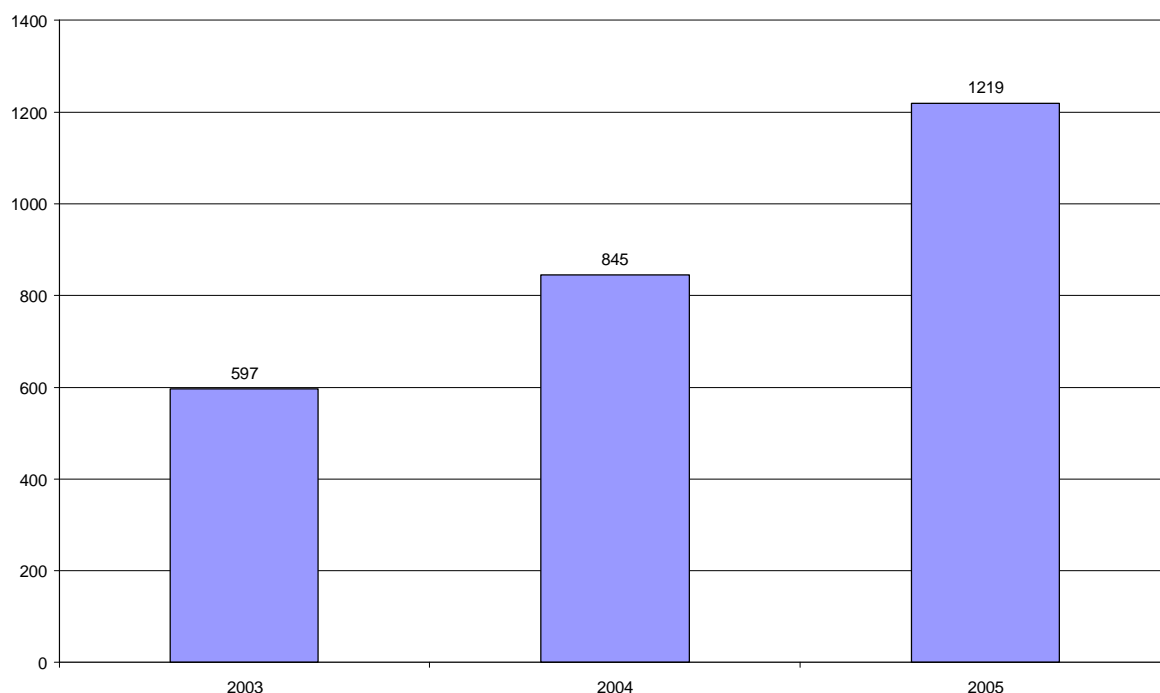
## What about Health & Safety?

The charity takes the topic of health and safety very seriously and has produced its own health and safety manual. Each bike is equipped with a suitably marked container to hold any items that might pose a bio-hazard to the rider or anybody who might come into contact with them. The charity has also ensured that it has adequate Public and Employers insurance cover.

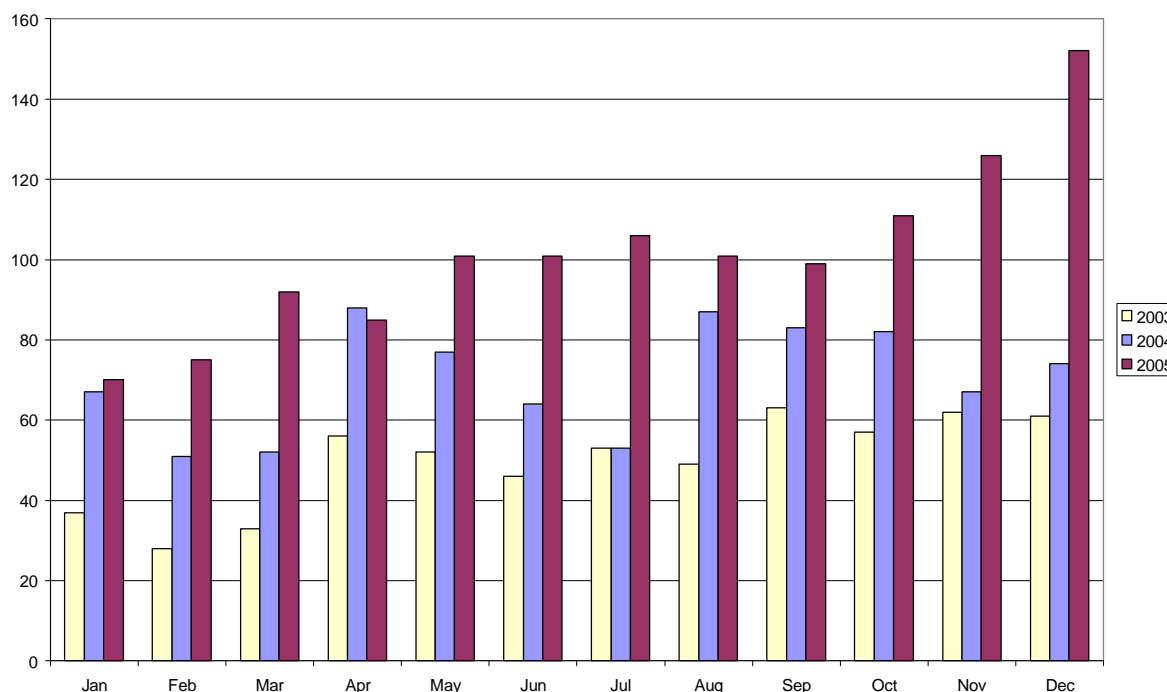
Although it is a condition of acceptance that all riders have reached an advanced standard of riding, all riders are checked to ensure that this standard is maintained and are encouraged to seek further training as appropriate. There are strong links with the local Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) groups with several members at observer or senior observer level and others with independently recognised advanced instructor qualifications.

## Summary of Calls

At the end of each quarter the Charity matches the job cards to the record sheets and then analyses the data. This document uses the result of such an analysis using the data for the whole of 2005. The figures for previous years have been shown as a comparison.



## No of Calls Received



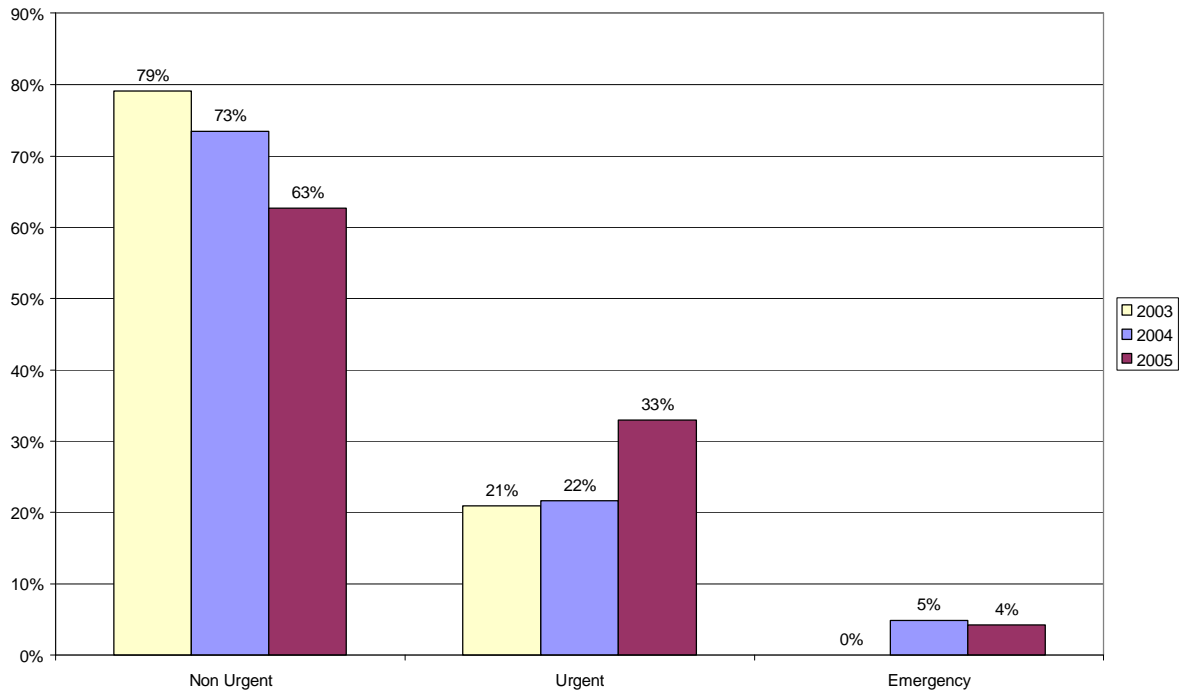
During 2005 the charity received a total of 1219 calls at a monthly average of 101 calls per month and never less than 70 calls per month. The number of calls received has steadily increased quarter on quarter as the year has passed whereas 2004 was essentially constant throughout the year. This is most likely due to the increasing use of our service by the North Bristol NHS Trust.

Calls Per Quarter	2005	2004
January – March	237	170
April – June	287	229
July - September	306	223
October - December	389	223
Totals	1219	846

## Classification of Calls

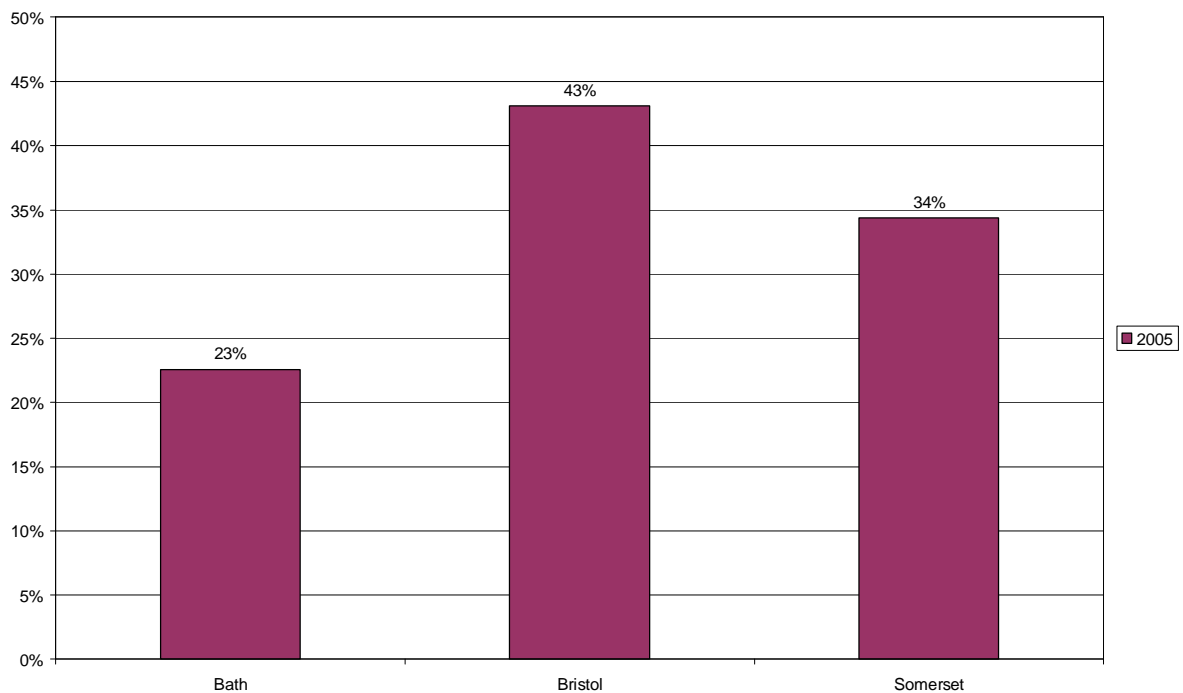
The calls were classified by the medical staff that placed or originated the call together with the duty Coordinator into one of three classes.

- Emergency – where the urgent delivery of the item will reduce risk to a patient’s life. The use of blue lights and sirens would be approved.
- Urgent – to be completed within a fixed period of time. The use of blue lights and sirens would not be approved.
- Non-urgent – as soon as practicable.



The use of these classifications allows us to align within the NHS and to more accurately identify those calls that should require the use of blue lights and sirens. Compared to 2004 the number of non-urgent calls has dropped by 10% and the urgent calls have risen by 11%. In Q2 non-urgent calls peaked at 70% of all calls but for the rest of the year they were around 60%. Urgent calls were 23% of calls in Q2 and steady at 36% for the rest of the year. Emergency calls varied over Q1 (5%) and Q2 (7%) but were steady at 3% for the latter half of the year.

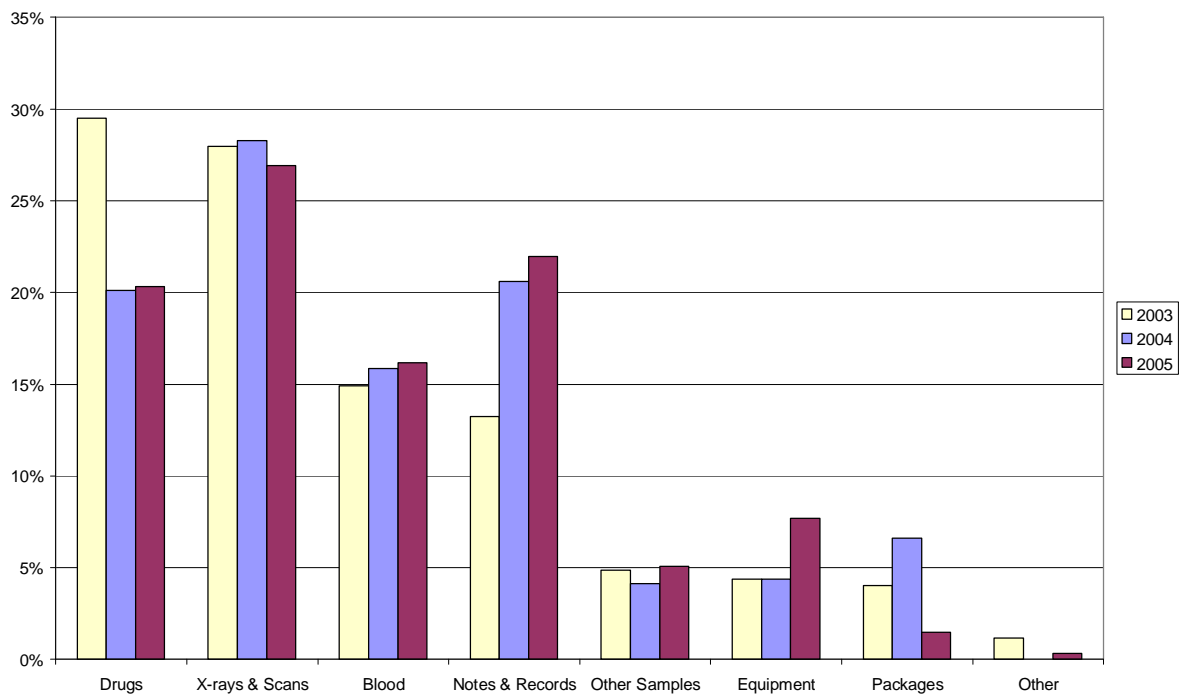
### Bike Usage



For the first time we have been collecting data on which bikes handle the most calls. This enables us to see where we might have spare capacity and where we need to target recruitment. The Bath bike has been fairly constant over the year with demand for the Bristol based bike rising as the year went on and the demand from NBHT users built up. The Bristol based bike handled nearly 47% of the calls during the last six months of the year.

### Items Carried

A range of items were carried over the year. The breakdown of what was carried remained reasonably constant over the year. The most significant changes compared to 2004 were an increase of 4% in equipment and a decrease of 6% in packages.

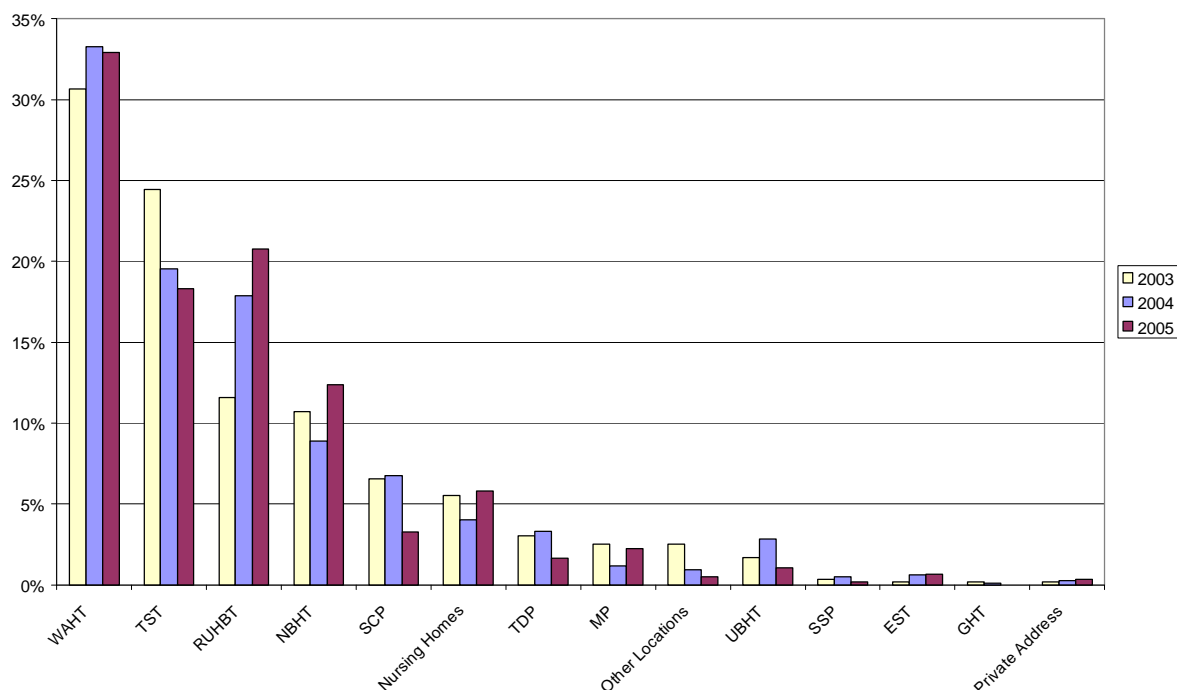


Other items we have been asked to carry included dressings, a holdall, documents and six cartons of ‘Thick & Easy’. Over the year we have decided not to carry such things as flowers, patient’s personal effects, and non-urgent drugs and medications to private addresses after 9pm at night. This last is to avoid our riders carrying controlled drugs into less than safe areas; and to avoid potential problems with elderly patients when somebody knocks at their door late at night looking like a policeman.

We will still carry urgent drugs and medications to private addresses but we require a contact telephone number so that we can ensure that the patient will be there when our rider arrives. On a few occasions we have turned up to a house that is in darkness.

## Pickup Locations

Weston General Hospital continues to be the most common pickup point with items usually going north to hospitals in the Bristol area. The number of pickups from Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton continues to fall (down 2% on 2004) whereas the Royal United Hospital in Bath continues to increase (up 3% on 2004).



North Bristol NHS Trust hospitals show an increase of 3% over 2004. In fact this was running at 5% of calls for Q1 & Q2 (a drop of 2%), but in Q3 it jumped 7% and in Q4 it jumped another 10% to take 22% of the calls. The final figures for December show that 33% of items were picked up from NBHT Hospitals. Hospitals in the South Coast primary Care Trust fell by 4%, Taunton Deane Primary Care Trust by 1% and United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust by 2%.

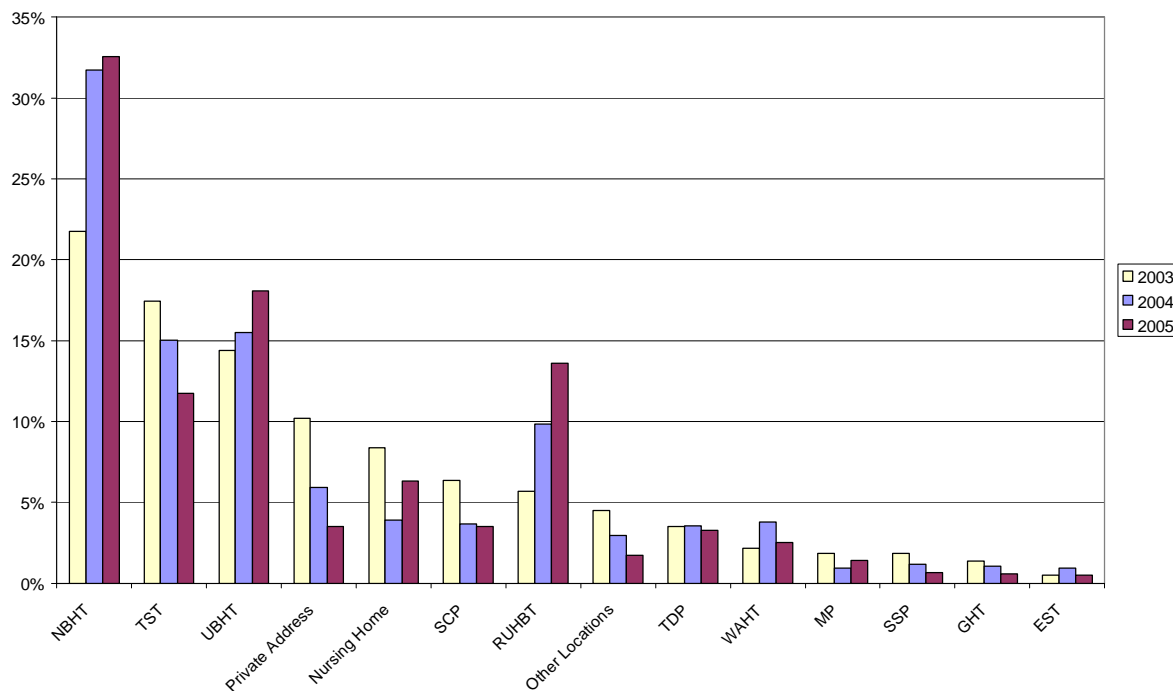
Collections from nursing homes have risen by 2% and Mendip Primary Care Trust (primarily Frome and Wells), have risen by 1%. Pickups from outside the area or locations we don't normally visit have fallen by 1%.

This year we also collected from St Andrews Hospital in Wells, Priorswood Medical Centre, the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, Sainsbury's in Bridgwater, Highbridge Medical Centre and Clevedon Hospital.

Key	Name	Hospitals
EST	East Somerset NHS Trust	Yeovil District Hospital
GHT	Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Cheltenham General Hospital, Delancey Hospital, Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, Standish Hospital
MP	Mendip Primary Care Trust	Butleigh Hospital, Queen Victoria Hospital Frome, Shepton Mallet Community Hospital, Wells & District Hospital, West Mendip Hospital
NBHT	North Bristol NHS Trust	Avon Orthopaedic Centre, Blackberry Hill Hospital, Burden Neurological Centre, Cossham Hospital Frenchay Hospital, Ham Green Hospital, Southmead Hospital, Thornbury Hospital, Westbury-on-Trym Hospital
RUHBT	Royal United Hospital Bath NHS Trust	Chippenham Hospital, Devizes Hospital, Malmesbury Hospital, Melksham Hospital, Paulton Memorial Hospital, Roundway Hospital, Royal United Hospital Bath, Trowbridge Hospital, Warminster Hospital, Westbury Hospital
SCP	Somerset Coast Primary Care Trust	Bridgwater Community Hospital, Burnham-on-Sea Memorial Hospital, Minehead Hospital, Williton Hospital
SSP	South Somerset Primary Care Trust	Chard Hospital, Crewkerne Hospital, South Petherton Hospital, Verrington Hospital
TDP	Taunton Deane Primary Care Trust	Dene Barton Hospital, Wellington Cottage Hospital, Wiveliscombe Hospital
TST	Taunton & Somerset NHS Trust	Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton
UBHT	United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust	Bristol Eye Hospital, Bristol General Hospital, Bristol Haematology & Oncology Centre, Bristol Homoeopathic Hospital, Bristol Royal Hospital for Children, Bristol Royal Infirmary, Keynsham Hospital, St Michaels Hospital Bristol, University of Bristol Dental Hospital
WHAT	Weston Area Health Trust	Weston General Hospital

## Delivery Locations

North Bristol NHS Trust hospitals continue to be our most popular destination (up 1% on 2004). United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust rose by 2% and the Royal United Hospital Bath NHS Trust by 4%. Deliveries to nursing homes rose by 2%. By comparison, Musgrove Park Hospital fell by 3% and deliveries to private addresses by 2%. This was a result of our change in policy not to carry non-urgent drugs and medications to private addresses after 9pm at night.



Deliveries outside the area or locations we don't normally visit have fallen by 1%. This year we also delivered to Boots the Chemist, Great Weston Hospital in Swindon, The Bath Clinic, University College Hospital in London, Sainsbury's in Bridgwater, Barnstable Hospital, Bradford on Avon Hospital, Marksham Hospital, Princess Elizabeth Orthopaedic Centre, Cardiff University Heath Hospital, The Health Protection Agency in Bristol, University of Wales Hospital & Clevedon hospital.

## Summary

2005 has been a very successful year for us, in some ways almost too successful. The increase in calls handled, particularly by the Bristol bike, is putting a strain on our riders who after all are volunteers. We have started to address this by not carrying non-urgent drugs and medications to private addresses after 9pm at night. Given that one of our aims is to "To provide an emergency out-of-hours courier service" we will have to review the number of non-urgent calls we handle as this is beginning to impact our ability to handle emergency and urgent calls.

## Contact Details

For more details contact the Chairman or the Secretary:

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