

Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2020/2021

Introduction

South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECAmb) endeavours to always ensure that our patients, staff, and the public are safe when in our care, and that the quality of the care which they receive is consistently at the highest possible standard. The high standard of care the Trust provides is reflected in the number of compliments that it receives which increase year on year and are up by just over 16% in 2020/2021. However, even with the best of intentions, inevitably sometimes things go wrong or do not meet expectations of the patient or their family, and this can lead to complaints about our service. SECAmb is committed to investigating complaints when they are received to ensure causes can be identified and learned from to improve practice and reduce the likelihood of a recurrence.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of all compliments and complaints that were received during the period of 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. This report will explain the route that complaints can take to be investigated, depending on their severity, and the processes that underpin this, it will also highlight any notable themes and explain any actions that were taken to mitigate risks relating to them. In addition, the report will highlight key learning that has been identified from complaint investigations.

Learning Lessons

Listening to our patients and understanding the impact we have on them via interactions with our service, when they are at their most vulnerable is an invaluable way for the Trust to obtain feedback and is an honour to receive, even when it is not always complimentary. Ensuring we use the feedback to learn lessons and to continuously improve our service is the primary objective of the Trust's patient experience function.

Although compliments and complaints from patients and their families are the more common route the Trust receives feedback, we recognised there were gaps in the way we sought feedback. Acknowledging that we relied on the public to contact us led us to question how we could obtain feedback from other cohorts of patients and the public i.e. those that perhaps do not find us easy to access or who do not feel empowered to feed back. To enable this work to be taken forward the Trust first had to distinguish who is heard from, so those that are not could be identified.

Collecting protected characteristics data (as defined within the Equalities Act 2010) from patients and the public that contact the Trust was deemed a reasonable way to identify who was being heard; during this year preparation work to start this data collection was undertaken and the function was in place to enable its commencement from 1st April 2021. The information will be utilised to aid the Trust to form a plan of how to reach out to patients and the public that are currently not heard by us.

Compliments show us what we are doing well, and this is as useful in our learning as the feedback received from complaints, details of the compliments that we receive are passed through to the Operating Unit Leadership Teams to enable them to use as an example of good practice.

Lessons identified from complaints throughout 2020/2021 have been wide ranging.

432 actions were identified from complaints during the period 01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021.

Actions from A&E complaints have included feedback provided to the crew both formally and informally, reflective practice, additional training and 'ride outs', when an Operational Team Leader spends the day with a crew reviewing their working practice. Actions from complaints for EOC and NHS111 are equally wide ranging and include feedback provided to the EOC and NHS111 staff both formally and informally, additional training or mentoring, clinical instruction, and policy / procedural reviews.

The below shows examples of the actions taken following complaint investigations:

A&E complaints:

Complaint	Actions taken
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Patients' daughter raising concerns over refusal to convey patient to hospital. Patient had fractured coccyx in two places and her inferior and superior pubic ramii. 2. Patient complained about the attitude and behaviour of two crew members who suggested they were faking her seizures. 	<p>A bespoke training session was arranged on history gathering and muscular skeletal assessment. This was initially run at the crew's operating unit before being shared Trustwide.</p> <p>Crews were reminded of their duty of care. Line manager met with them to ensure that they were aware of the Mental Capacity act and to reiterate the importance of reporting of safeguarding or Datix for patient safety. They were also reminded about the use of the mental capacity check list.</p> <p>The line manager met with crew for an incident debrief and to review the crews need knowledge of Epileptic and non-Epileptic seizures, from this meeting additional training, if required, would be put in place.</p> <p>Investigating manager discussed with clinical leads to see what work could be done service wide to improve staff knowledge throughout the Trust.</p>

EOC complaints:

Complaint	Actions taken
<p>Complaints received regarding our Emergency Medical Advisors (EMA) and Clinicians result in the call being audited, from this we can identify what could have been done better to improve our patient's experience. This is provided by way of feedback to our EMA and Clinicians by their individual line manager during which they discuss the audit and the ways in which the call could have been handled better, identify any training and agree the way forward when this will take place.</p> <p>If an issue with Pathways is identified it is put forward to NHS Pathways for review, any issues that are found needing to be circulated through our Emergency Operations Centres to all our EMA's and Clinicians by way of Clinical Bulletins.</p>	

NHS111 complaints:

Complaint	Actions taken
<p>Patient complaining about 111 service and them not understanding the seriousness of their condition. Patient had to undergo emergency operation to remove their appendix.</p>	<p>A pathways issue will be put forward regarding appendix related questions not presenting when a patient has diarrhoea alongside vomiting and abdominal pain.</p>
<p>Daughter complains that after 4 calls to/from 111, her elderly father was still waiting in pain for a doctor to contact them.</p>	<p>It was noted that this was not an isolated incident and urgent work was undertaken to address this. The prioritisation of cases within the clinical queue was reviewed and following this several outcomes were increased in priority for call back. Within the new system, this case would have been a higher priority based on the outcome after the initial Health Advisor assessment. Alongside this, the skill mapping of cases was reviewed and signed off from the clinical leads for each specialty skill set so cases will be automatically allocated to the appropriate CAS clinicians for further management.</p>

Covid-19 Pandemic

On 30 March 2020 NHS England and NHS Improvement supported a pause of the NHS complaints process. However, the Trust took the decision to continue investigating complaints within our stipulated 25 working day timescale, at a time when many other NHS Trusts suspended investigations. This decision was taken as we felt it was the right thing for our patients, and so the Trust could continue to learn and provide our complainants with timely responses to the concerns they had raised regarding our service. During the second lockdown and the severe pressures the Trust experienced, the timescale for completing investigations was extended from 25 to 50 working days. Only 1.25% of the complaints closed during this time exceeded the Trust's 25 working day timescale. Despite the operational challenges faced due to the Covid pandemic the average days taken by the Trust to respond to complaints during 2020/2021 was 20 working days.

Key Achievements

- Continued to investigate complaints and respond to complainants in a timely manner.
- 94% of EOC complaints, 97% of NHS111 complaints and 82% of A&E complaints responded to within 25 working days.
- During the Covid-19 pandemic the Patient Experience Team took on a greater responsibility for investigating some Level 2 complaints to ease the necessity for operational staff to be taken off the road to complete investigations.

Patient and Family / Carer Experience Strategy

Following Board approval of the first Patient and Family / Carer Experience Strategy in May 2020, the first planned workstream was to review how we collect, collate, and triangulate all our data relating to patient experience. It is recognised that whilst we have systems in place currently, they are likely to become more sophisticated over the next year. We will be able to understand more of the experience of our patients and use quality improvement methodology to make changes arising from that feedback. This work has been delayed due to the Covid pandemic but, our Patient Experience Group recommenced their meetings in May 2021 and work on moving this forward is now underway.

Compliments

Each year the compliments received by the Trust, thanking our staff for the work they do, far outnumber complaints. Compliments are recorded on the Trust's Datix system (electronic patient safety and risk management software system), alongside complaints, so both the positive and negative feedback is captured and reported back to operational staff. The staff concerned receive a letter from

the Chief Executive in recognition of the dedication and care they provide to our patients. During 2020/2021 the Trust received 2,190 compliments, an increase of just over 16% on the number received during 2019/2020 of 1,887.

Compliments are shared with crews and their leadership team; staff appreciate being recognised and feel valued when they receive compliments, this validates the good work they are delivering and makes them feel part of a successful team. The Trust believes, as with complaints not being recognised or investigated, the same approach should be taken with compliments.

Compliments are often published in the Bee Line, allowing staff to see the good work their colleagues are doing. Compliments received influence morale overall and make a big difference to the overall behaviours of the staff.

Table 1 Compliments by service/operating (OU) area and month:

Service / Operating Area and Month	Apr 2020	May 2020	Jun 2020	Jul 2020	Aug 2020	Sep 2020	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Total
Ashford OU	5	10	13	16	16	11	7	9	9	9	15	17	137
Brighton and Mid Sussex OU	11	12	19	13	16	18	23	17	8	20	13	19	189
Chertsey OU	15	14	15	13	13	17	8	16	8	11	14	6	150
Community First Responder	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Gatwick and Redhill OU	26	19	26	29	32	36	26	28	22	27	44	33	348
Guildford OU	17	16	14	12	29	20	9	12	5	15	15	9	173
Medway and Dartford OU	17	22	22	22	20	19	17	17	18	11	20	24	229
Paddock Wood OU	18	14	18	14	13	10	10	12	9	9	11	14	152
Polegate and Hastings OU	13	17	20	12	14	16	19	10	13	12	14	18	178
Tangmere and Worthing OU	22	18	12	29	21	13	17	21	13	20	13	21	220
Thanet OU	18	13	10	19	17	21	12	11	16	14	14	17	182
HART	0	1	0	1	1	3	1	2	0	4	2	0	15
East EOC	2	2	7	5	4	7	1	6	1	5	2	0	42
West EOC	4	6	2	5	11	8	7	10	5	3	2	1	64
NHS111	1	4	5	8	5	5	5	3	7	5	2	1	51
Private Ambulance Provider	0	0	0	7	6	4	5	9	6	6	8	7	58
Safeguarding	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	169	168	183	205	219	208	167	183	140	171	190	187	2190

Direct feedback and compliments resulting from 999 calls to the Trust's Emergency Operations Centres are more difficult to obtain as calls tend to be very concise and focused. However, examples have been included below where our Emergency Operations Centres and NHS111 staff provided much needed support to our patients.

The Trust has continued to ensure that staff receive compliments in a timely manner, the average number of days to process a compliment is five working days. The 2190 compliments received during 2020/2021 represent one compliment for every 810 interactions.

Some examples of the compliments the Trust received during 2020/2021 are below:

"Can I give a really big thank you to two paramedics who transferred my elderly father to East Surrey Hospital. Both paramedics were so lovely to my Dad despite them having such a busy night. My last memory of him leaving my house was him sitting strapped in the ambulance laughing his head off, saying this was the best day of his life! They were so kind to him and made him laugh so please pass on my thanks."

"I just want to thank the EMA I spoke to, I am ex SECAMB staff myself, but I've never had to call an ambulance for someone until today. It was complete hell, and I was so scared, I didn't get the name of the EMA I spoke to, but she was completely amazing and really calm. She had an amazing tone of voice and was so warm and reassuring with the way she handled the call."

"I just wanted to pass on my thanks to the two crew who attended that day. Right from the beginning they couldn't have been more understanding and compassionate. We have received many reactions over the last year, from what do you do that for, it hasn't solved anything so maybe you should think on that, and it's always with bated breath I wait to see what this person is going to say. Wow, they were incredible! They listened to the ups and downs of our journey to get help, they sympathised with her over the lack of support so far, but they were encouraging her that if we keep fighting, we will get the right help."

"Can I compliment the two paramedics who came to attend to my wife, on Sunday 17 January. They were so professional, calm, and thorough. They explained what they were testing and why and finished with a clear explanation of the diagnosis they reached. By the time they finished it must have been towards the end of their shift, but they were still pleasant and cheerful. A valuable asset to SECAMB."

"Compliment email received from a patient who was having a mental health crisis and called our NHS111 service. The lady that I spoke to was empathetic, supportive, and remarkably was able to bring me back to semblance of rationality. How she achieved this still remains a mystery to me but is testament to how good she is at her job! She proceeded to remain with me on the phone for the

next 45 minutes and made sure I was in a place of safety, whilst simultaneously keeping me occupied through conversation. I cannot thank this lady enough, and if it wasn't for her immediate actions, I hate to think what may have happened."

Complaints

During the past three years the complaints received by the Trust have decreased by just under 29% from 1,003 in 2018/2019 to 714 in 2020/2021.

Statistics:

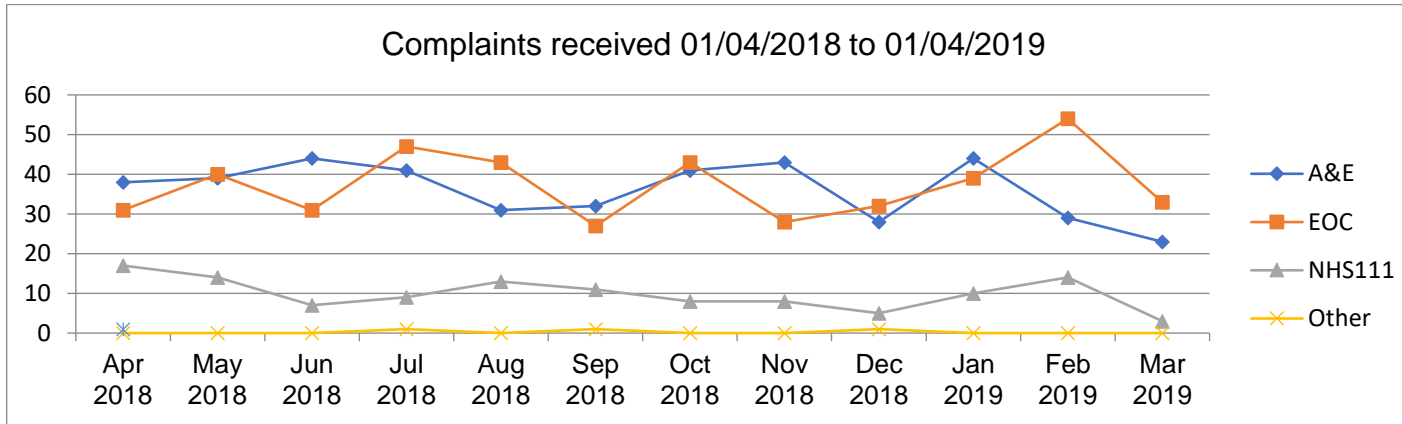
During 2020/2021:

- Our Emergency Operations Centre staff answered 830,594 calls.
- Our A&E road staff made 690,798 responses to patients.
- Our NHS 111 staff took 943,840 calls.
- SECAmb received 714 complaints.

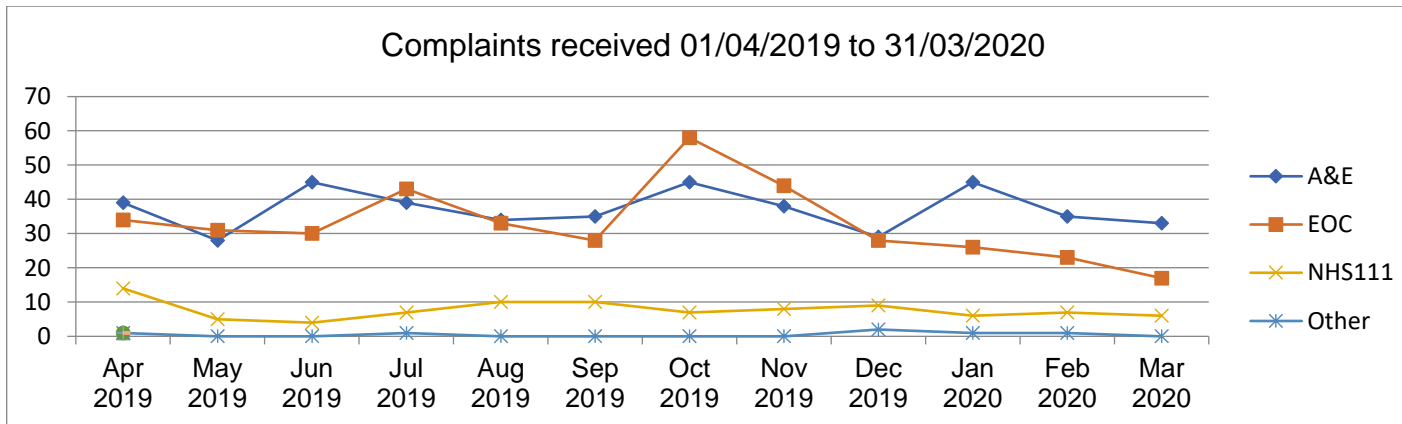
This equates to one complaint for every 2,485 patient interactions. Detailed below is a comparison between the complaints received by the Trust in the past three years which shows a continuing downward trend.

SECamb complaints over the past three years:

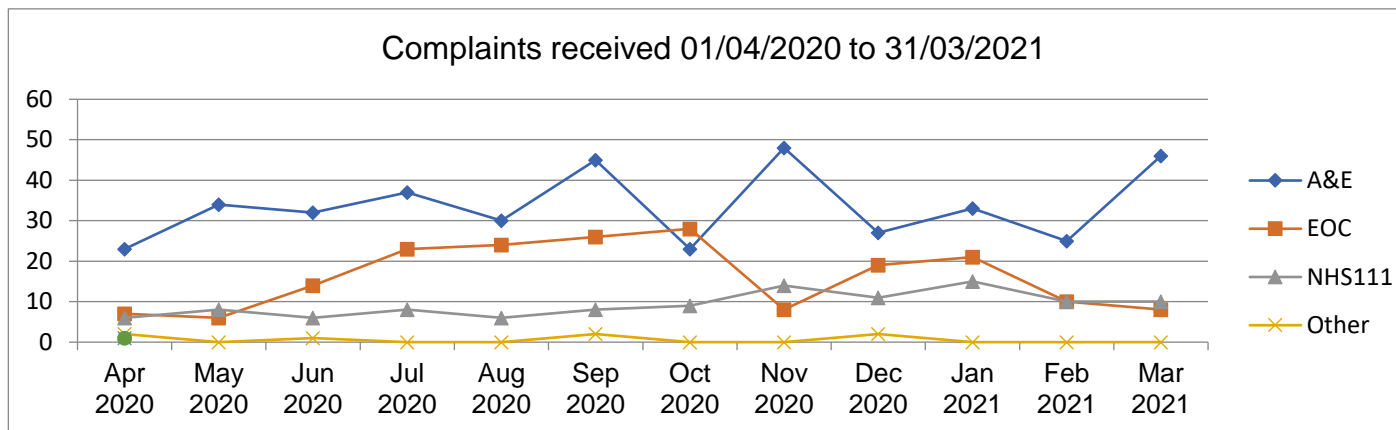
2018/2019 – 1,003.



2019/2020 – 939.



2020/2021 – 714.



There was a notable reduction in the number of complaints received during the first wave of the pandemic in April 2020. This reduction can be attributed to two aspects 1) there was a significant decrease in demand for our service which led to exceptional response times, hence a reduction in concerns and 2) the public’s immense gratitude towards the NHS at this time meant that often, even when they may have had cause to complain, they appeared to be more forgiving so did not.

Complaints by service/operating (OU) area and month:

Service / OU / Month	Apr 2020	May 2020	Jun 2020	Jul 2020	Aug 2020	Sep 2020	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Total
Ashford OU	1	1	1	2	1	6	4	4	2	6	1	3	32
Brighton and Mid Sussex OU	1	7	2	5	5	5	4	3	2	4	5	6	49
Chertsey OU	2	0	2	3	3	4	1	4	1	2	1	1	24
Contingency Planning and Resilience	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Gatwick and Redhill OU	3	5	2	4	3	7	3	8	8	4	6	4	57
Guildford OU	2	1	1	2	2	6	0	1	5	2	4	6	32
Medway and Dartford OU	7	7	6	9	9	6	5	11	4	8	1	8	81
Paddock Wood OU	2	3	9	5	4	4	4	2	3	2	2	5	45

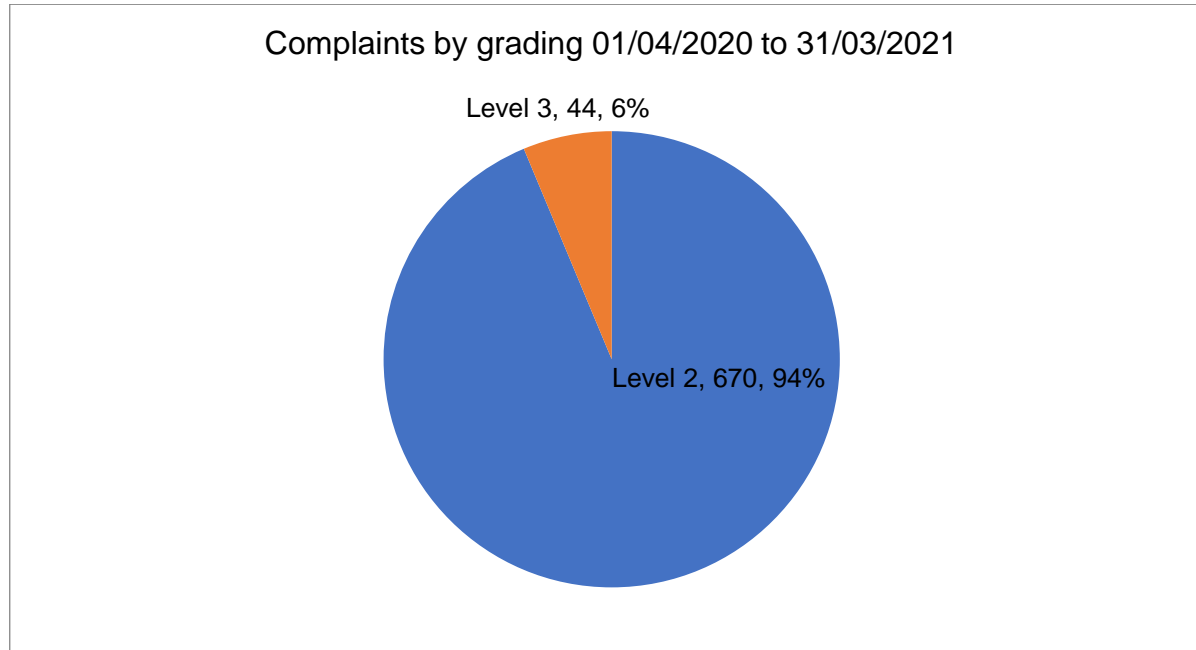
Service / OU / Month	Apr 2020	May 2020	Jun 2020	Jul 2020	Aug 2020	Sep 2020	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Total
Polegate and Hastings OU	2	4	5	4	4	5	2	7	2	7	2	7	51
Tangmere and Worthing OU	1	3	5	6	4	6	2	6	5	4	5	3	50
Thanet OU	3	4	4	6	5	4	7	3	3	4	4	5	52
East EOC	5	0	4	7	7	4	9	2	4	1	1	3	47
West EOC	1	5	5	7	7	14	10	5	7	9	3	3	76
NHS111	6	8	6	8	6	8	8	14	11	15	10	10	110
Blue Light Collaboration	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Critical Care Incidents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Infection Control	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Legal Services	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Patient Experience	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	38	48	53	68	60	81	59	70	59	69	45	64	714

Complaints are allocated by the Patient Experience Team to the service / operational unit upon receipt, all complaints regarding timeliness are allocated to and investigated by the Emergency Operations Centres.

Complaints are reviewed and graded according to their apparent seriousness; this ensures they are investigated proportionately. These are:

- Level 2 – a complaint that appears to be straightforward, with no serious consequences for the patient / complainant, but needs to be sent to a manager for the service area concerned to investigate.
- Level 3 – a complaint which is serious, having had clinical implications or a physical or distressing impact on the patient / complainant, or to be of a very complex nature.

Most complaints received during 2020/2021 were graded as level 2, 670 (94%), with the remaining 44 (6%) as level 3.



The grades allocated are constantly reviewed during the investigation and can be changed either during or on completion, this may result in the grade being increased from a level 2 to a level 3 and even referral to the Serious Incident Team for consideration for review in the Serious Incident Group. Complaints can also be downgraded from a level 3 to a level 2, if during or on completion of the investigation the seriousness is not as great as originally thought.

Complaints are categorised into subjects and can be further distinguished by sub-subject if required.

Complaints received during 2020/2021 by subject and service area:

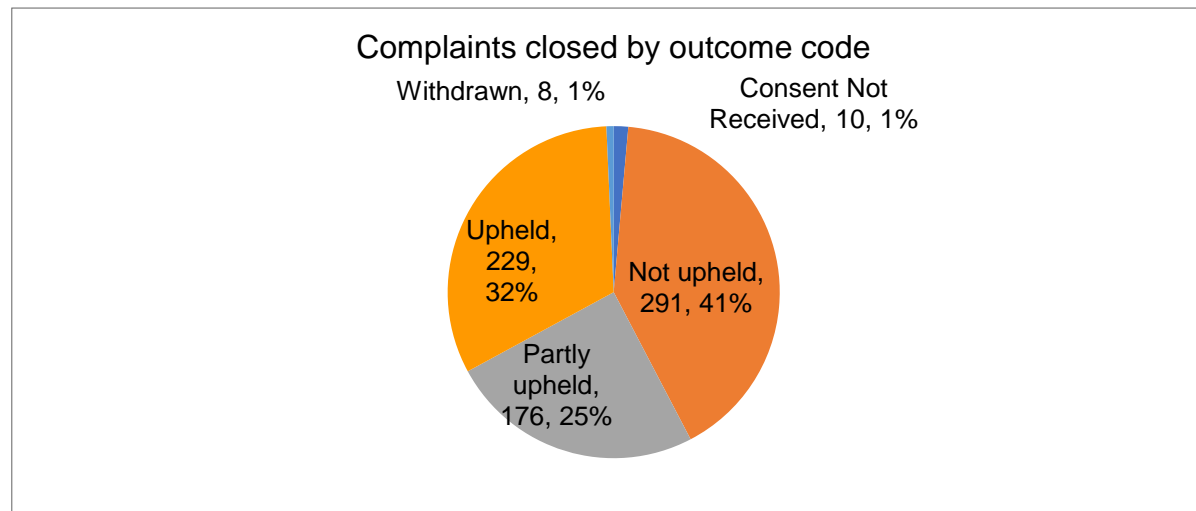
	A&E	EOC	NHS111	Other	Total
Administration	1	0	2	0	3
Communication issues	5	1	7	2	15
Concern about staff	266	19	18	4	307
Miscellaneous	7	1	1	1	10

	A&E	EOC	NHS111	Other	Total
Patient care	118	85	68	0	271
Timeliness	5	88	15	0	108
Total	402	194	111	7	714

When a complaint is concluded, a decision is made by the Investigating Manager to either uphold or not uphold the complaint, based on the findings of their investigation. The Patient Experience Team review the decision on receiving the investigation report and will challenge the Investigating Manager should they feel the decision incorrect.

During 2020/21, 714 complaints were responded to; of these 57% were found to be upheld or partly upheld. If a complaint is received which relates to one specific issue, and substantive evidence is found to support the allegation made, the complaint is recorded as 'upheld'. If a complaint is made regarding more than one issue, and one or more of these issues are upheld, the complaint is recorded as 'partially upheld'. The outcome from complaints is shown in the figure below:

Complaints by outcome, 2020/21



There are a small number of complaints that are closed due to consent not being received from the patient to disclose information from their medical records. However, these complaints are still investigated and any learning that is identified by the investigating

manager implemented. There are also a small number which are withdrawn by complainants who specifically request an investigation does not take place and asks us to withdraw their complaint. There were 15 such complaints in the reported period.

Closed complaints by Subject and Outcome:

	Consent Not Received	Not upheld	Partly upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Administration error	0	2	0	0	2	4
Breach of confidentiality	0	3	1	1	0	5
Communication issues	0	8	1	6	0	15
Crew diagnosis	1	10	6	1	0	18
Discrimination	0	1	0	0	0	1
DOS issues	0	3	2	2	0	7
Equipment issues	0	3	3	2	0	8
HCP failed to visit	0	1	0	3	0	4
Inappropriate treatment	1	32	6	10	1	50
Made to walk	0	1	3	0	0	4
Miscellaneous	0	5	1	2	1	9
Not transported to hospital	0	17	10	3	0	30
Pathways	1	46	25	74	1	147
Patient injury	0	2	2	1	0	5
Privacy and dignity	0	1	0	0	0	1
Siren noise	0	1	0	1	0	2
Skill mix of crews	0	0	1	0	0	1
Staff conduct / attitude	4	137	90	45	3	279
Standard of driving	0	9	3	5	0	17
Timeliness - 111 Response	0	2	2	9	0	13
Timeliness - A&E	3	7	20	64	0	94
Total	10	291	176	229	8	714

The highest category of complaint which were upheld or partly upheld in 2020/2021 is staff conduct / attitude with 135, 19%, this is a slight increase on the number of similar complaints received in 2019/2020 when 132 were upheld or partly upheld. The second

highest category is NHS Pathways, both in our Emergency Operations Centre's and within NHS111 with 99 upheld or partly upheld, 14%, this is down on last year when 130 complaints were upheld or partly upheld.

Of the overall complaints received regarding staff conduct / attitude, 279, 48% were upheld or partly upheld and resulted in significant learning for our staff, this is gained through reflective practice where crews complete a paper to reflect on how they could have dealt with a situation differently which is then discussed with their line manager. In a minority of cases, it can also result in formal action via the Trust's Disciplinary Procedure. Any complaint received which relates to the use of NHS Pathways is referred for the call to be audited, the findings are then fed back to the call handler by the line manager, any additional learning identified is put in place.

Trust response timescale

During 2020/2021, 87% of complaints were responded to within the Trust's timescale, compared to 63% in 2019/20. The Trust's agreed timescale within the complaint's procedure is for 90% of complaints to be responded to within 25 working days.

Directorate	Number of complaints closed	Number of complaints closed within 25 working days	% number of complaints closed within 25 working days
A&E	403	332	82
EOC	203	190	94
NHS111	103	100	97
Other	7	3	43
Overall	716	625	87

Complaints by service area: A&E field ops

The table below shows the A&E field operation's complaints received by subject. The two main themes of complaints relating to emergency field operations are, as in previous years, 'concern about staff' (which includes complaints about staff conduct, attitude, breach of confidentiality and the standard of driving), 266 (67%), and 'patient care', 118 (29.5%). Both are slightly down on 2019/2020 280 (63%) and 138 (31%) respectively.

OU / Subject	Administration	Communication issues	Concern about staff	Miscellaneous	Patient care	Timeliness	Total
Ashford OU	0	1	15	0	12	0	28
Brighton and Mid Sussex OU	1	1	25	2	11	0	40
Chertsey OU	0	1	15	1	4	0	21
Gatwick and Redhill OU	0	1	36	0	14	0	51
Guildford OU	0	0	13	1	10	1	25
Medway and Dartford OU	0	0	46	1	22	1	70
Paddock Wood OU	0	0	28	2	10	0	40
Polegate and Hastings OU	0	0	31	0	8	1	40
Tangmere and Worthing OU	0	1	24	0	16	0	41
Thanet OU	0	0	32	0	11	0	43
Total	1	5	266	7	118	4	399

Concern about staff:

Concerns regarding staff feature as one of the top five themes of complaints within the NHS. For the Trust this includes the standard of driving for which there were 21, a decrease on 2019/2020 where 45 were received.

The overall 266 complaints the Trust received regarding concerns about A&E road staff during 2020/2021 reflects a slight decrease over 2019/2020 when 280 were received. Following investigation 129, 48%, were either partly upheld or upheld.

Patient Care:

Complaints about patient care are divided into sub-subjects, which include:

- Crew diagnosis
- Equipment issues
- Inappropriate treatment
- Patient injury
- Patient made to walk to the ambulance

- Patient not conveyed to hospital
- Privacy and dignity
- Skill mix of crew

During 2020/2021 the Trust received 118 complaints specifically about the care provided by our road staff and an additional 36 complaints where 'patient care' was a secondary concern i.e., initial complaint regarding timeliness and concerns raised regarding care provided by the crew once on scene, a total of 154 complaints, of which 65 (42%) were upheld or partly upheld, compared to 172 during 2019/2020 where 53% were upheld or partly upheld.

63 complaints were received in relation to inappropriate treatment with 22 (35%) of those upheld or partly upheld.

34 complaints were received about patients not having been conveyed to hospital, of these 14 (41%) were upheld or partly upheld.

Crew diagnosis, which is occasionally used interchangeably with non-conveyance (not all misdiagnoses resulted in non-conveyance) accounted for 23 complaints of which 8 (35%) were either upheld or partly upheld.

Complaints by service area: Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs)

The Trust recognised during 2019/2020, following the poor response rate to complaints within their 25-working day timescale of only 34%, that steps needed to be taken and in June 2020 employed an EOC and NHS111 complaints investigator within the Patient Experience Team. This resulted in a dramatic improvement in 2020/2021 with 94% of complaints responded to within 25 working days.

Complaints received regarding the Trust's EOCs have reduced dramatically over the last four years from 577 during 2017/2018, 452 during 2018/2019, 394 during 2019/2020 to an all-time low of 147 in 2020/2021. There were also an additional 66 complaints where timeliness and / or call triage was a secondary concern, making a total of 213.

This reduction is in the main due to 'timeliness' complaints, 205 in 2019/2020 down to 91 (including secondary concerns) in 2020/2021. Although there is no confirmed reason for this it is thought that there is a greater understanding from the public of the pressures faced by the emergency services during the Covid pandemic.

The figure below shows the EOC complaints by subject. The two main themes of complaints about the EOC, as in previous years, are 'patient care' 103 (48%) and 'timeliness' 91 (43%).

	Communication issues	Concern about staff	Miscellaneous	Patient care	Timeliness	Total
East EOC	1	8	0	25	13	47
West EOC	0	9	1	59	31	100
Total	1	17	1	84 (+19)	44 (+47)	213

Call triage:

Call triage (NHS Pathways) formed the highest number of complaints with 103 complaints received where an element of the triage was questioned, with 80 (78%) being upheld in some part. As in previous years these complaints were often found to be because of human error, with staff not correctly following the triage process, some examples of errors made are below:

- selecting the wrong pathway
- insufficient probing of symptoms
- insufficient explanation
- EMA not deferring to clinician
- Clinical Supervisor not using NHS Pathways to reinforce their clinical decision
- not following policy correctly
- issue with NHS Pathways itself

Timeliness:

The next highest number of complaints received regarding the EOCs were timeliness, 93% of these complaints were upheld or partly upheld. Timeliness complaints are when the Trust does not achieve its target response time; when this is confirmed the complaint is always upheld.

All 999 calls which are the subject of a complaint are audited and feedback is provided to the call taker from the audit by their line manager, all identified learning is put in place via action plans.

Complaints by service area: NHS111

During 2020/2021 the Trust received 111 complaints about its NHS111 service, compared to 93 during 2019/2020, 120 during 2018/2019 and 166 during 2017/2018: an increase of 20% on 2019/2020 but still lower than 2018/2019 and 2017/2018.

	Administration	Communication issues	Concern about staff	Miscellaneous	Call triage	Timeliness	Total
NHS111	2	7	18	1	68	15	111
Total	2	7	18	1	68	15	111

Of the 111 complaints received, 71 (61%) were upheld in some way.

As with the Trust's EOCs, the highest number of complaints related to call triage; 68 (61%); of those 43, (63%) were upheld in some way. As with complaints about the Trust's EOCs, audits are completed on all calls subject to a complaint and feedback provided to the call taker by their line manager, to aid their learning.

Complaints by service area: Other

These are complaints the Trust received relating to non-operational issues.

	Communication issues	Concern about staff	Miscellaneous	Timeliness	Total
Operations - Central	2	1	1	0	4
Legal Services	0	1	0	0	1
Medical Directorate, Critical Care Paramedic Incidents	0	2	0	0	2
Contingency Planning and Resilience	0	0	0	1	1
Infection Control	0	1	0	0	1
Total	2	5	1	1	9

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

Any complainant who is not satisfied with the outcome of a formal investigation into their complaint may take their concerns to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) for review. When the Ombudsman's office receives a complaint, they contact the Patient Experience Team to establish whether there is anything further the Trust feels it could do to resolve the issues. If we believe there is, the PHSO will pass the complaint back to the Trust for further work. If the Trust believes that local resolution has been exhausted, the PHSO will ask for copies of the complaint file correspondence to review and investigate.

In the year 2020/21 the PHSO contacted the Trust and asked for copies of six complaint files. We have been advised that for two of these cases they do not intend to investigate, and they have requested further information for one. At the time of writing, no investigations have been confirmed as proceeding.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Unlike other Trusts SECamb does not have a separate Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), this function is carried out within the Patient Experience Team. PALS is a confidential service that offers information or support, and to answer questions or concerns about the services provided by SECamb which do not require a formal investigation. These are entered on the Trust electronic patient safety and risk management software system, Datix, as a Level 1 case.

The table below details the number of PALS enquires received by the Trust during 2019/2020 and 2020/2021:

Type	2019/20	2020/21	Percentage difference
Concern	60	96	60%
Enquiry	28	27	-3.60%
Information Request	336	356	6%
Total	424	479	13%

The Trust has seen a 60% increase in the number of concerns, registered examples of these are:

111 caller would like to provide feedback regarding the Covid-19 messages she had to make a selection on before being put through to speak to someone (unfortunaely this wording is nationally mandated).

Member of the public said member of staff, who caused damage to her car and property, was very rude to her and did not seem to care (fleet department is dealing with the claim).

Patient chasing Trust about damage to his door after we had to force entry.

Why was ambulance parked on the footway?

The Trust also receives a number of complaints each year about the siren noise from our ambulances which are answered through concerns.

Most requests for information are Subject Access Requests under the Data Protection Act, where patients or their relatives require copies of the electronic patient care record (ePCR) completed by our crews when they attended them, or recordings of 999 or NHS111 calls, for a range of reasons. These requests are dealt with in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations.

Other contacts are requests for advice and information regarding what to expect from the ambulance service, people wanting to know how they can provide us with information about their specific conditions to keep on file should they need an ambulance, calls about lost property, and on occasion, families wanting to know about their late relatives' last moments.

Monitoring Systems

The Trust has continued to improve the incorporation of the electronic reporting system (Datix) into the complaints process which has improved the ability to produce accurate reports and streamline the audit process. The implementation Datix Cloud, the latest most up to date version, it is hoped this will improve further once implemented.

A weekly report is produced each Monday and sent to senior managers within all operational areas who are responsible for complaint investigations and copied into directors. As part of the process for producing this report reminders are sent separately to investigating managers advising them of complaint reports which are due to be returned to the Patient Experience Team in the upcoming week. The Patient Experience Manager has recently joined the Operations Quality and Patient Safety meetings where the report format will be discussed so that it can be adapted and improved. When the weekly report is sent a summary of the current open complaints within the Trust is included, a copy of this for the week 11/03/2021 to 28/03/2021 is shown below:

Summary of this week's report against last week's																				
Operations A&E		Date oldest complaint received without a report		Operations EOC		Date oldest complaint received without a report		Operations NHS111		Date oldest complaint received without a report		Operations Other		Date oldest complaint received without a report		Total		Date oldest complaint received without a report		
This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	

Summary of this week's report against last week's

Total number of open complaints	27	30	27/01/2021	27/01/2021	4	5	15/03/2021	08/03/2021	9	4	09/03/2021	09/03/2021	0	0	N/A	N/A	40	39	27/01/2021	27/01/2021
Breakdown of open complaints																				
Breached complaints without reports	1	1	27/01/2021	27/01/2021	0	0	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A	1	1	27/01/2021	27/01/2021
Late reports, excluding breaches	3	2	01/03/2021	18/02/2021	0	0	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A	3	2	01/03/2021	18/02/2021
Complaints still under investigation, within time	19	23	08/03/2021	01/03/2021	2	5	15/03/2021	08/03/2021	9	4	09/03/2021	09/03/2021	0	0	N/A	N/A	30	32	08/03/2021	01/03/2021
Summary of reports with PET																				
	Number of reports		Date earliest report received by PET		Number of reports		Date earliest report received by PET		Number of reports		Date earliest report received by PET		Number of reports		Date earliest report received by PET		Total number of reports with PET		Date earliest report received by PET	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week	This week	Last week

Summary of this week's report against last week's

Reports with PET	4	4	25/03/2021	18/03/2021	2	0	24/03/2021	N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A	6	4	24/03/2021	18/03/2021
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Reporting Arrangements

Monthly compliance of internal complaints timescales is reported to the Trust Board within the Integrated Performance Report. Additional management assurance is also routinely provided to the Quality and Patient Safety Committee.

The national return for complaints with the NHS is the KO41a return. This data is submitted on a quarterly basis to the NHS Digital via their online portal. This information provides the number of complaints received with demographics and adds to the national data.

The Patient Experience Team

The overarching responsibility for complaints, PALS and compliments sits with the Patient Experience Team. The work is diverse and brings the team into contact with many patients and their families, some of whom are struggling with mental illness, disorders, or bereavement. Whilst many of these contacts are constructive, there are increasing occasions when team members have had to deal with highly complex and stressful or distressing situations. Supportive work began with the team in terms of resilience in 2018 and continues, including meeting with the Trust Mental Health Team.

Conclusion and future areas of development

The Trust continues to develop the rigour of complaints investigations. The Head of Patient Safety has developed training for Trust investigators ensuring that all complaints, incidents, and serious incidents are investigated, using the appropriate level of investigation, to the same high standard, this has demonstrably led to more tailored findings and appropriate learning outcomes.