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22/12/2022

Email:

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Dear,

I am writing in response to your enquiry under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) reference FOI 221218.

You requested the following information, please also see our response below:

Dear South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust,

What are the protocol call handlers adhere to when the public access the service while placing a 999 call.

When a member of the public calls 999, the call is initially handled by a BT operator. This operator establishes which emergency service that the caller requires, and where the member of the public is located, to help determine where to route the call.

[Emergency Services 999 - Products & services | BT Wholesale](#)

Calls that are determined to require an ambulance are routed to one of our three Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs). Our trained emergency call takers use a computer aided dispatch tool (CAD) called Cleric, which hosts a clinical decision support system called NHS Pathways. We use these systems to locate the patient and conduct a preliminary assessment in order to determine the urgency of their need for treatment and the skill set required (this is known triaging a patient) so we can send the most appropriate response based on their clinical need. This might be an ambulance, or a single responder paramedic.

In certain circumstances, such as a response to a cardiac arrest, the call handler will also be providing interim advice to support the call until the crew arrive, such as instructions for the caller on how to give cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Some patients who have minor ailments do not require an immediate emergency response or may not need an emergency response at all. If necessary, we can refer our calls to clinically qualified staff in our EOCs who can take more details and provide further advice over the phone.

Our trained emergency call takers and our clinical call handlers can also signpost or make referrals to other community healthcare professionals such as GPs or community nurses, or to social care professionals, ensuring every patient always receives the most appropriate treatment for their need.

Protocols for the management of calls are set out by NHS Pathways concerning the training and auditing of the clinical decision support system as a product for triage. This product is owned by the Department for Health and Social Care, commissioned by NHSx and delivered by NHS Digital.

[NHS Pathways - NHS Digital](#)

Protocols concerning management of 999 calls alongside the use of NHS Pathways, including functionality within the CAD, are developed and managed by SECamb.

I hope you find this information of some assistance.

If for any reason you are dissatisfied with our response, kindly in the first instance contact Caroline Smart, Head of Information Governance via the following email address:

FOI@secamb.nhs.uk

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Coordinator
South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust