

	Agenda No	60-23
Name of meeting	Quality and Patient Safety Committee	
Date	24 August 2023	
Name of paper	Annual Safeguarding Report	
Responsible Executive	Margaret Dalziel Interim Executive Director for Nursing & Quality	
Author	Philip Tremewan, Nurse Consultant for Safeguarding	
Synopsis	<p>The Annual Report seeks provide assurance to patients, service users and key stakeholders that South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust is discharging its Safeguarding responsibilities.</p> <p>The report provides evidence on how these responsibilities were discharged during 2022/23.</p> <p>The report also evidences areas of good safeguarding practice and highlights how key areas of safeguarding learning have been shared across the organisation.</p>	
Recommendations, decisions or actions sought	The Quality & Patient Safety Committee are asked to approve the Annual Safeguarding Report	
Does this paper, or the subject of this paper, require an equality impact analysis ('EIA')? (EIAs are required for all strategies, policies, procedures, guidelines, plans and business cases).	Yes/No	



Safeguarding Annual Report 2022/23

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1. Introduction

Throughout 2022/23 South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECAMB) has striven to meet its statutory responsibilities in the care and protection of patients of all

ages. This report demonstrates to the Trust Board and external agencies how SECamb discharges these statutory duties and the report offers assurance that the Trust has effective systems and processes in place to safeguard patients who access our services. We continue to deliver a high-quality credible service to patients and families, whilst reflecting continually on areas for learning and improvement.

The existing statute which continues to underpin the work of colleagues who support healthcare practitioners delivering services to children is in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 guidance and Section 11 of the 2004 Children Act. All staff have a statutory responsibility to safeguard and protect the children and families who access our care.

The legislation which frames the work of colleagues in adults' services is influenced by the introduction of the Care Act 2014. The introduction of The Care Act 2014 put adult safeguarding on a statutory footing for the first time in addition to embracing the principle that "the person knows best". In addition, our work to safeguard adults is informed by The Mental Capacity Act (2005) and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards amendment in 2007.

SECamb recognises that safeguarding is everyone's business and strives to support the Department of Health's six principles of Safeguarding:

- **Empowerment** – People feel safe and in control, give consent to decisions and actions about them. They should be helped to manage risk of harm to themselves.
- **Protection** – Support and help for those adults who are vulnerable and most at risk of harm
- **Prevention** – Working on the basis that it is better to take action before harm happens
- **Proportionality** – Responding in line with the risks and the minimum necessary to protect from harm or manage risks
- **Partnership** – Working together to prevent or respond to incidents of abuse
- **Accountability** – Focusing on transparency with regard to decision making.

The Annual Report provides the readers with the following detail:

- An overview of the national and local context of safeguarding
- An overview of the areas of practice included in safeguarding within the Trust
- An update on safeguarding activity within 2022/23
- Assurance that the Trust is meeting its statutory obligations and the required national standards about safeguarding
- An overview of any significant issues or risks regarding safeguarding and the actions being taken to mitigate these.

2. Governance and Commitment to Safeguarding

As an NHS Service provider SECamb is required to demonstrate that there is safeguarding leadership and commitment at all levels within the organisation and that we are fully engaged in support of local accountability and assurance structures, via the Safeguarding Boards across Kent, Medway, Surrey, and Sussex. Most importantly, SECamb reinforces the principle that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and develops a culture of continuous learning and improvement to promote the safety and welfare of adults at risk, children and young people and looked after children.

SECamb ensures that its senior management is committed to safeguarding at Executive level at Trust Board. Safeguarding is always included in the annual cycle of business and comes within the scope of influence and scrutiny of the Quality & Patient Safety Committee (QPSC). The Trust have robust governance structures and systems in place in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and the Care Act 2014.

Evidence of SECamb’s commitment to safeguarding includes clear statements on the Trust’s website demonstrating how our services safeguards the welfare of children, young people and adults.

The Trust’s Safeguarding function sits within the portfolio of the Nursing and Quality Directorate and is led by the Executive Director for Quality & Nursing. The work of the department is scrutinised at the Safeguarding Sub-Group (SSG) meeting jointly chaired by the Nurse Consultant for Safeguarding and Safeguarding Lead. Terms of Reference for the group highlights the required core membership and includes senior roles and individuals from a wide range of operational, educational, HR, staff partnership and commissioning colleagues.

During the year the Safeguarding Lead continued to provide strong leadership on operational safeguarding across the Trust and support the Nurse Consultant for Safeguarding and the Executive Director of Quality & Nursing in delivering high standards of care and experience to patients. At the time of writing the total skill mix of the Safeguarding Team at SECamb is:

Job Role	Band	WTE
Nurse Consultant for Safeguarding	8b	1
Safeguarding Lead	8a	1
Specialist Safeguarding Practitioners	7	2
Safeguarding Coordinators	5	3.5

The skill mix allows for focus on the Trust's internal and external safeguarding responsibilities. However, a continued year-on-year increase in safeguarding referral numbers continued to challenge capacity within the team to meet the expected demand.

The focus includes representation at Safeguarding Adults Boards, Safeguarding Children's Partnerships and child death review panels across Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Additionally, during 2022/23 there had been continued investment in the Trust's approach to safeguarding training, including the introduction of Level 3 face to face training via Teams for registered clinicians across SECamb's 999 and 111 services.

Challenges in meeting the increased demand on the Trust's Safeguarding function resulted in the Nurse Consultant for Safeguarding presented a paper at July's QPSC highlighting the capacity challenges that faced the Safeguarding Team. The paper provided scrutiny on the capacity of SECamb's Safeguarding Team to meet the demand because of a significant year-on-year rise in workload over the past four years.

The paper reflected on the significant patient safety and organisational risk because of reliance on alternative duties staff to maintain the trust's statutory safeguarding responsibilities.

The same paper was presented to the Senior Management Group (SMG) at their meeting on 9th August asking them to prepare for a business change template aimed at recruiting x2wte band 5 Safeguarding Coordinators and replace the reliance on overtime and alternative duties to staff to fulfil statutory responsibilities.

The aim of the business case was to ensure the continued safe and effective delivery of both the statutory and non-statutory functions of the Safeguarding department that promotes positive patient outcomes through an increase in substantive human resource.

The completed Business Case was presented and approved at the Trust's Business Case Group in the spring of 2023. The subsequent benefit to patients, vulnerable people and the Trust will be:

- Improvement in the triage, processing, and onward referral to the relevant local authority of safeguarding concerns escalated by colleagues across field operations, EOC and NHS111.
- The subsequent provision of information to partner agencies to safeguard those at risk (Local Authorities & Safeguarding Boards, Police, ICB's etc.)
- Developing and delivering Safeguarding Training in line with the statutory expectations of national guidance
- The Trust's business need for a responsive Safeguarding function to meet the challenges of safeguarding its workforce

Safeguarding Team Governance Days

After more than two years working remotely and with little face-to-face contact and few CPD opportunities for the team, the Specialist Safeguarding Practitioners arranged a Governance Day in October 2022.

This was a day for the team to come together, provide internal team governance, an opportunity to discuss ways of working and to identify gaps in knowledge and learning wishes.

The Governance Days have been providing a forum to team build, to consolidate ways of working, including devising internal team Standard Operating Procedures. The team have welcomed several external speakers, including local child death review teams, domestic abuse services as well as internal SECAMB colleagues who have shared knowledge from their teams' involvement with vulnerable patients.

Safeguarding Sub-Group (SSG)

Standing agenda items at each SSG meeting provide assurances to the Trust Board and Executive Team. These include a review of the Trust's Safeguarding policies and procedures, departmental workplan, safeguarding risks and monitoring progress against safeguarding action plans following Serious Case Reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews, Safeguarding Adults Reviews or Section 11 returns.

During 2022/23 the Terms of Reference for SSG were reviewed and approved by the Quality Governance Group (QGG). SSG is chaired by the Nurse Consultant for Safeguarding, meets six times a year and has representation from a wide range of internal and external stakeholders including those from regional ICBs and local authorities. Key themes and discussions from SSG are escalated by exception to QGG jointly chaired by the Executive Medical Director and Executive Director of Quality & Nursing.

Provision of Regional Safeguarding Assurance

Regular assurance evidencing how the trust is discharging its safeguarding responsibilities is provided to the Designated Professionals at Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care System (ICS), SECAMB's lead commissioners for its 999 service. Similar assurance is also provided to the Kent & Medway (K&M) ICS regarding SECAMB's activity across its commissioned NHS111 service:

- Submission to the Surrey Heartlands ICS Designated Safeguarding team of an annual report and 6 monthly update that provides a narrative and data against each of the standards
- Submission of exceptions reporting for any areas of non - compliance with the standards as identified
- Submission to the Sussex ICS Designated Safeguarding team of Section 11 audits undertaken and resultant action plans for the pan-Sussex Safeguarding Children's Partnerships
- Providing evidence at contract and assurance meetings
- Named / Lead professionals' meetings/supervision with Surrey Heartlands ICS, Designated Safeguarding team and use of the Annual Assurance Framework Report
- Providing information to the Surrey Heartlands ICS Designated Safeguarding team in the twice-yearly Dashboard on safeguarding activity.
- Providing evidence at Surrey Safeguarding Adults Board, Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership meetings and subgroups
- Participating in Surrey Heartlands ICS Designated Safeguarding team and SSCB and SSAB audits and inspections

- Providing quarterly assurance to K&M commissioners on SECAmb's NHS111 safeguarding provision
- Demonstrating the Trust's commitment to preventing modern slavery and human trafficking by evidencing a Modern Slavery Act statement on its public facing website

3. Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

As a commissioned NHS provider SECAmb must ensure that staff are aware of the Trust's Safeguarding policies and any associated guidance and procedures.

The Safeguarding function assumes lead responsibility for several organisational policies, all of which are either in date or are undergoing the ratification process. The policies are:

- Managing Safeguarding Allegations Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure for Children, Young People & Adults
- Mental Capacity Act Policy, currently out to consultation in anticipation of update and review
- Safeguarding Supervision Policy

Changes to Policies and Procedure made during 2022/23

- Following discussion and recommendations at SSG, the decision was made to amalgamate the two separate Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Referral Procedure. The rationale supporting this change was to ensure that all the relevant information was consistent and contained within one central source.

4. Appropriate Training, Skills and Competencies

The *Safeguarding Children and Young People: Roles and Competencies for Healthcare Staff* Intercollegiate Document defines the safeguarding training expectations for all individuals working in healthcare. The document sets out five levels of training based on roles throughout the organisation.

During 2022/23 SECAmb has delivered L1&2 Safeguarding training to new starters only. All registered clinicians will over the next three years will be expected to complete level 3 Safeguarding training.

Outlined in the Intercollegiate Document are the expected competencies for level 3 training. Registered practitioners are required to undertake L3 face-face training. This is mandatory training that would normally be delivered through classroom-based sessions, so following a pause due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Safeguarding Team have been offering web-based learning via Microsoft Teams.

The training sessions were delivered in Q3 and Q4 and achieved a total highlighting that a total 88% of eligible staff had successfully undertaken the training during this time. compliance across the trust- an increase of over 30% in the September 22 to March 23 period.

During 22/23 safeguarding training also focused on Mental Capacity where 89.7% staff completed and Prevent 88.1%

As a result of the increased demand and highest level of surge management throughout the winter, the Trust made the decision to postpone its Key Skills training to ensure enough clinicians were able to provide operational support across the service. Subsequently training figures stagnated during this time. The Safeguarding Team are working alongside senior operational leaders to reinstate the required training.

During 22/23 SECamb welcomed international paramedics to our workforce. As part of their Transition to Practice course bespoke safeguarding training that alongside pre reading and online learning covers elements of Level 2 and 3 training.

Bespoke Level 2 face to face training was delivered via MS Teams to 433 Emergency Operating Unit Staff. The training focused on the unique challenges posed when safeguarding patients based solely on a telephone call. To measure the impact of the training the team will be completing a 3-month audit of EOC referrals to assess whether a) the quality of information within the referral has improved, b) amount of referrals received.

CC

The SECamb Safeguarding Team works in collaboration with AACKSS (Air Ambulance Charity, Kent Surrey Sussex) and provides their safeguarding function. Working alongside the AACKSS Clinical Director, who holds their internal responsibility for safeguarding, and liaising with other clinical managers, Doctors and crews allows open communication and ease of information sharing to protect the vulnerable patients they attend.

AACKSS safeguarding referrals are passed to the SECamb Safeguarding Team for escalation, as appropriate, to external partners, following the same process as for concerns raised by SECamb staff.

The Specialist Safeguarding Practitioners have provided supportive and SECamb specific, face-to-face, Level 3 Safeguarding Training sessions. They also incorporate any reporting of AACKSS involvement within SECamb reports for Safeguarding Adult Reviews, Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews, and the Child Death Review process. On occasions, these also include out of area incidents that have had no SECamb attendance, but that AACKSS have provided mutual aid to surrounding services for.

Meeting regularly with AACKSS managers ensures the continued smooth cross-agency processes (including the development of a new referral process), informs their training, and allows learning from safeguarding reviews to be shared. AACKSS also benefit from access to the expertise of the Safeguarding On-Call function.

AACKSS have access to the Safeguarding on Call service, this was utilised during a particular difficult incident involving a child in Surrey who had a significant fall. The scene was very difficult to manage with lots of concerning behaviours and inconsistent stories from the family. AACKSS discussed with an on-call practitioner and a plan was worked on for safety netting the child, support was also offered to the staff to ensure their emotional wellbeing.

Impact of Training

During January to March 2023, 433 Emergency Operation Centre staff completed a programme of bespoke hybrid Level 2 Safeguarding Adults and Child sessions delivered over teams with a PowerPoint presentation alongside a live Q&A session facilitated by a Specialist Safeguarding Practitioner.

The Practitioner asked the cohort to complete a feedback form with their thoughts and suggestions for improvement and to rate their knowledge pre and post training.

The most important part of this training was, to ensure the message of 'Safeguarding is Everyone's Business' was integral and, that participants understood the importance of everyone no matter what their role having a key responsibility to report safeguarding concerns.

4. Do you feel confident in how to raise a safeguarding concern ?

[More Details](#)

● Not at all	0
● A little	1
● Fairly	9
● Very	14
● Extremely	20



Level 3

During September to March 23, 743 SECamb staff completed Level 3 Safeguarding Adults and Child sessions delivered over Ms Teams with a PowerPoint presentation facilitated by a member of the safeguarding team. These sessions were interactive with Q&A sessions throughout as well as videos and images.

During 2022/2023, Safeguarding Level 3 training was constantly refreshed with updated changes of legislation and recommendations from reviews that SECamb had contributed to.

The cohort were asked to complete a feedback form with their thoughts and suggestions for improvement and to rate their knowledge pre and post training. Below are the results.

1. How would you rate your knowledge of safeguarding adults and children prior to this training?

[More Details](#)

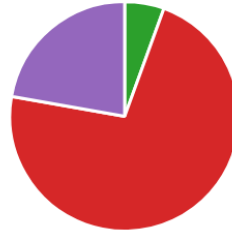
● Minimal	0
● Limited	1
● Fair/Average	9
● Good	6
● Excellent	2



2. How would you rate your knowledge around safeguarding adults and children after undertaking this training ?

[More Details](#)

● Minimal	0
● Limited	0
● Fair/Average	1
● Good	13
● Excellent	4



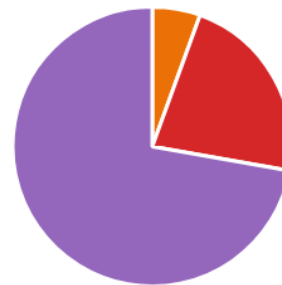
The overall trend was that participants felt that their knowledge improved because of completing their training. With all participants rating their knowledge at least fair/average with majority rating their knowledge as good.

5. Do you feel confident in where to go for safeguarding support and guidance?

[More Details](#)

Insights

● Not at all	0
● A little	1
● Fairly	0
● Very	4
● Extremely	13



The other key parts of the training focused on, raising concerns and, knowing where to go to seek extra support. It is clear from the feedback that those that undertook the training now feel they have the knowledge of where to go for support where needed.

The Safeguarding Team asked for suggestions on how to improve the training, the majority of comments were extremely positive with a selection of them below.

- *no suggestions - very good running of course with information and interaction, good flow*
- *NONE - WELL TAUGHT*
- *no suggestions, but your on-call staff have always been excellent. perhaps sell that a little more to staff that they can access help.*
- *No, I found the course really engaging and useful to my role.*
- *No, I think this was an excellently run session. Thank you*

5. Effective Supervision and Reflective Practice

Safeguarding Supervision for the Trust’s Safeguarding Lead and Nurse Consultant is undertaken by the relevant Designated Nurse for Safeguarding within clinical commissioning.

Safeguarding supervision helps support resilience across an exceptionally busy function.

Specialist Safeguarding Practitioners have provided supervision to Frequent Caller Team and Safeguarding Coordinators in a group format.

Feedback from Frequent Caller Lead:

'The safeguarding team has always played an important role in supporting the trusts frequent caller team. The safeguarding and frequent caller practitioners meet on a regular basis to discuss high risk and complex cases and work to ensure that local authorities are aware of such concerns. The safeguarding on-call function remains an important tool to escalate specific urgent concerns and the team are always helpful and reassuring.'

The introduction of safeguarding supervision has provided the team with a platform for shared learning via informal discussions to think and reflect on historical cases. It provides an opportunity for support and assurance to improve the quality of work we provide to our patients through the use of case discussions and general reviews, as well as providing expert guidance and assistance where required.

Given many frequent callers present with challenging and complex physical, mental and social issues, continued partnership working between our teams is integral to ensure the trust fulfils its obligation to safeguard our vulnerable patients and ensure their care needs are met.'

6. Effective Multi-Agency Working

2022/23 Safeguarding Referral Information

The department has continued to see increases in referral activity. During the 2022/23 a total of 29,303 safeguarding referrals were made to local authorities across Kent, Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire. This equates to an increase of 23% increase compared to the previous year. All referrals continue to be triaged by members of the Safeguarding team before forwarding to the relevant local authority.

During the winter of 22/23 there was an increase in Environmental concerns, this reflected what our crews were seeing in the communities we work in with the cost-of-living crisis escalating.

Safeguarding referrals for children constitute 20% of the total number of referrals despite the under 18 population accounting for around 10% of SECAMB's workload. This is indicative of staff feeling confident to raise concerns when they identify family or child in need of support. The Specialist Safeguarding Practitioners, Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Nurse Consultant have continued to work collaboratively with NHS England safeguarding teams, Local Authorities, ICSs, Local Authorities as well as other health partners such as hospitals, Midwives, Health Visitors and GPs to ensure the pathways used to send SECAMB referrals onto are correct and are meeting the needs of the Making Safeguarding Personal agenda.

The recognition by the SECAMB workforce of the increasing care needs across a frail and vulnerable population are highlighted clearly in the safeguarding referrals received by the Safeguarding team. Although a portion of initial concerns may not be overtly safeguarding, a review of a patients care needs by social care can often identify other concerns such as inadequate care provision or identifying other unmet needs. Continued inadequate care provision can often lead to poor health outcomes leading to the possibility of more emergency and, urgent care being required.

During 2022/23 increasing care needs were recognised in 39% of referrals made by the SECAMB workforce across its 111 and 999 services. However, further scrutiny of the figures suggests that 60% of these referrals have a recognised primary or secondary safeguarding concern attributable to self-neglect, mental health, neglect, access to early help, domestic abuse or other risk category. From the information recorded on Datix by the Safeguarding team, the data indicates that less than 15% of total safeguarding referrals are solely highlighting the increasing care needs and risks experienced by patients.

One of the six principles of safeguarding is prevention and working on the basis that it is better to act before harm happens. During 2022/23 SECAMB have contributed to several Safeguarding Adult Reviews commissioned by the Safeguarding Adults Boards across the region. Analysis of the initial contacts SECAMB had with the subjects of these reviews, the emerging concerns were not necessarily overtly safeguarding concerns, but were indicators that the individuals were beginning to struggle. These were people who ultimately died, or were at risk of dying, because of known or suspected abuse or neglect.

Analysis of the number of safeguarding referrals indicate a very high proportion (96%) are submitted in line with local authority thresholds across the region. Additionally, evidence indicates minimal communication from partner agencies challenging the appropriateness of referrals highlighting risks to vulnerable children and adults.

Despite the continued increase in referral number and subsequent pressure on the team's capacity there is overwhelming assurance that SECAMB are escalating concerns appropriately and in a timely way. This claim is further supported by data supplied by Surrey County Council (SCC) to SECAMB indicating that the Surrey Adults MASH undertook further action on over 90% of safeguarding referrals submitted by the Trust. Feedback from SCC confirmed that over 70% of the safeguarding referrals were made for individuals who were already in receipt of services and had a previously recognised care or support need or safeguarding risk.

Demonstrating Resilience

During November 2022, SECAMB was impacted by an unexpected IT failure, affecting most systems, and disabling Datix, the platform utilised for managing safeguarding referrals. During the first day, staff were encouraged to telephone the Safeguarding Team with concerns with the safeguarding telephone number directed to all team members. However, this proved unsuccessful, with only 10-15 calls received all day.

It was established that the IT problem would not be resolved immediately, and an alternative plan was required to allow staff to continue to safeguard our vulnerable patients, particularly over the weekend.

A Microsoft Form was created that replicated the existing SECAMB safeguarding referral form and was rolled out to all staff (Operations, EOC and 111) to ensure staff starting shift were aware of this emergency pathway. QR codes were generated, and posters shared for display in prominent locations on Trust sites.

The Safeguarding Team could then triage and process these referrals to decide the most appropriate route for escalation.

It was calculated that approximately 85% of the expected referral numbers had been received via this method and almost 400 vulnerable people, who would have otherwise gone unsupported due to systems failures, were safeguarded by SECAMB staff with the concerns

raised being escalated to the local authorities, GPs, Police, and all other agencies SECAmb engages with during its normal business.

This process has now become part of a substantive Safeguarding Team Business Continuity Plan and can be readily reactivated at short notice, should the need arise.

Further, this has led to the development of a similar form to gather referrals from Private Ambulance Providers in a secure and timely manner, where previously they were completing paper forms which were scanned and emailed to the Safeguarding Team. This plan was fully approved and supported by the Safeguarding Subgroup, Professional Practice Group and PAP Contracts Managers, and is expected to be rolled out early in 2023-24.

Safeguarding On-Call

Safeguarding On-Call is staffed by 2 Specialist Safeguarding Practitioners and one Safeguarding Lead, 356 days a year 24 hours a day on a rota basis. SECAmb is the only ambulance service across the country to offer a safeguarding on-call service. It has proven to be effective, particularly outside office hours, where specialist safeguarding support was previously not available.

The aims of the service are:

- To provide specialist safeguarding advice above and beyond what may be expected of our staff.
- Support with protracted incidents where there is a safeguarding element to support staff in a timelier total scene time and reduce job cycle times
- To enable staff to concentrate on the clinical element of an incident
- To provide links between other emergency services and/or social care
- Escalate concerns to other key services and system partners across the region
- To provide timely information to Child Death teams following a child death this ensures a timely response to the family as appropriate, support for staff immediately after a child death.
- Attend scenes only where necessary to provide specialist advice at incidents such as Free Births where clinicians are not expected to have the required skill set to deal with what can be a difficult scenario. A safeguarding specialist can provide support to the clinicians on scene allowing them to carry on caring for their patients.

Safeguarding on-call ask for feedback to ensure it is meeting the needs of the staff who use the service and during the year 22/23 the on-call service took 497 calls, an increase from 204 since 21/22.

Below are some examples of feedback and details below to give an idea of vulnerable patients that have been supported.

Incident 1

A concern was highlighted to the Safeguarding on-call service regarding a child who was reported to have drowned. The child was an unaccompanied asylum seeker living in a hotel with other refuge children. The child was allowed to go into the sea alone with no supervision. Safeguarding on-call liaised out of hours with colleagues to identify any other children who may be at risk and escalated to the relevant duty social care team and police.

Incident 2

A concern was highlighted to the Safeguarding on-call service regarding a warden controlled flat. The patient had carers who also visited others in the building. On the morning of the carers' arrival, she noticed that her regular patient was very withdrawn and reluctant for personal care, when personal care was commenced the carer noticed bruises to the upper thighs, the vaginal area, and arms. The carer called the Police who also called us. Safeguarding on-call supported the crew to liaise with Police, out of hours social care and the homes manager to ensure a safety plan for the patient was put in place. The crew were supported after the incident with ensuring they were followed up for their emotional support.

Developments in Partnership Working

The Safeguarding team have built good relationships with partners across social care and with the Designated Safeguarding Teams within the ICBs. This enables queries to be answered quickly where necessary to ensure there is no delay to patient care, it also raises the profile of the ambulance service within the wider safeguarding network.

During 22/23 there was an increase in asylum seekers being accommodated within the SECamb area. A piece of work took place between SECamb and the local ICB in Surrey to identify regular ambulance call outs to accommodation in the Redhill/Crawley/Gatwick areas. This information helped support local health and social care initiatives aimed at minimising unrecognised risks to vulnerable asylum-seeking adults and children.

The team noticed a trend of increased "mental health only" referrals, these being mental health concerns in patients with no care and support needs and no indication of harm, abuse or self-neglect. These are not safeguarding concerns and do not require safeguarding referrals. Instead, there are already multiple pathway and referral options available to all staff, through the Directory of Services and Service Finder.

In collaboration with the Mental Health Nurse Consultant, communications have been distributed with a learning poster, particularly aimed at EOC and 111 to ensure that calls with a mental health concern have an appropriate pathway in line with their usual triage process. This information is available in the Safeguarding SharePoint page and has been linked and shared widely on Yammer.

[Mental Health Concerns \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com)

The Safeguarding team have provided regular updates via the Team SECamb Yammer page. These have included links to partner agencies training courses on particular safeguarding topics as well as themed newsletters. Topics for newsletters have included environmental concerns in relation to the cost-of-living crisis, Domestic Abuse and LGBT+ and the unique challenges faced by this community.

Child Death Reviews

Members of the Safeguarding Team continue to be involved in the multi-agency Child Death Review process, which now supplies information to the National Child Mortality Database. During 2022/2023, SECamb has reported on a total of 142 cases: 26 in Surrey, 38 across Sussex including Brighton & Hove and 78 in Kent & Medway.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Assurance

Throughout 2022/23 SECamb provided regular assurance about its safeguarding function to the Safeguarding Adults Boards, Safeguarding Children's Partnerships and ICBs across Kent, Medway, Surrey and Sussex. Exception reporting and six-monthly dashboard returns

were submitted in line with other NHS providers to Surrey Heartlands ICS. The information was subsequently shared with all Safeguarding Boards across the region. Regular reporting included assurance on:

- SECAMB's policy developments in relation to Safeguarding Supervision
- Prevent activity
- Safeguarding training
- Referral activity
- Serious Incidents that had a safeguarding theme

Areas of challenge in SECAMB's safeguarding assurances and governance are discussed and agreed at the Safeguarding Sub-Group and through Safeguarding Supervision with Designated Professionals at the ICB.

SECAMB's Contribution to wider Multi-Agency Enquiries

The Care Act 2014 (Section 42) requires that each local authority must make enquiries, or cause others to do so, if it believes an adult is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect. An enquiry should establish whether any action needs to be taken to prevent or stop abuse or neglect, and if so, by whom.

When an allegation about abuse or neglect has been made, an enquiry is undertaken to find out what, if anything, has happened.

The findings from the enquiry are used to decide whether abuse has taken place, whether the adult at risk needs a protection plan and whether any wider learning can reduce future risk.

The Trust in 2022/2023 were requested to contribute to 164 safeguarding enquires, an increase from 70 throughout 2020/21. The reason for this increase maybe multifactorial however it is likely to be because of increased response times meaning patients waiting longer for ambulances and social care providers working in a tight financial envelope meaning less community resources.

Areas of learning for SECAMB are recorded and monitored at the bimonthly Safeguarding Sub-Group. The example below highlights the outcome of a Section 42 enquiry and the subsequent learning for the Trust in relation to the patient's experience whilst waiting for an ambulance.

Care Act - Section 42 Enquiry - A patient was self-neglecting, and this was documenting by crew on the patients care record as well as a great safeguarding referral. As it was a Friday evening the crew also shared concerns with out of hours social care and the hospital safeguarding team. This ensured that a home assessment could be carried out before patient was discharged. On the back of this great piece of practice we have included this scenario in our L3 training.

Areas of learning Section 42 Enquiry

The Trust highlighted the fact that major trauma to the ear was not sufficiently recognised within the NHS Pathways triage system and raised to NHS digital for potential revision in future updates.

Requirements under Section 47 of the Children Act

Under the requirements of the Children Act (1989) a section 47 investigation will involve social care receiving a referral from SECAMB or another agency that results in a local authority suspecting that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. A Strategy Discussion Meeting will be held to decide whether to initiate enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

Strategy Discussions/Meetings will contact SECAMB to establish if the Trust have had any information in relation to the children or family as it is acknowledged that SECAMB will often have information that others will not be due to the way our service is accessed. The Safeguarding Team supported 21 Section 47 enquiries during the reporting year.

Children's Act - Section 47 Enquiry - case summary

SECAMB were asked to participate in a strategy discussion for a child who we attended when intoxicated. When intoxicated, the child disclosed that she had been sexually abused by her father. A Specialist Safeguarding Practitioner attended a strategy meeting and discussed our involvement in the case. SECAMB were thanked for their contribution and vigilance as this was the first time, she has disclosed said abuse.

A Section 17 enquiry is a query in relation to a Child in Need assessment under the Children's Act 1989. A child is defined as being in need either through disability or poor health and they are unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable life or a reasonable standard of health or development, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a local authority. There were no Section 17 investigations that SECAMB were asked to support during 2022/2023.

7. Reporting Serious Incidents (SIs)

Contained within the safeguarding commissioning standards are the expectations that SECAMB will ensure that any serious incidents are reported and are investigated in line with the Serious Incident Framework. Additionally, the Trust needs to ensure that any serious incident related to safeguarding children and adults is reported to the lead commissioners. As has been highlighted elsewhere within this report regular exception reporting to the lead commissioner provides assurances on the overlap between SIs and safeguarding. A senior member of SECAMB's Safeguarding team sits as a core member of the trust's Serious Incident Group (SIG). Representation from Safeguarding is also documented in the Terms of Reference for SIG.

During 2022/23 the Trust declared 57, 8 of these had a safeguarding element because of adults or children at risk receiving sub-optimal clinical care where Local Authority safeguarding thresholds were met.

Learning from SI investigations with safeguarding concerns are reviewed at the Trust's Safeguarding Sub-Group where any subsequent assurance or risks are escalated via the Quality Governance route jointly chaired by the Executive Medical Director and Executive Director for Quality and Nursing.

8. Engaging in SPRs/SARs/DHRs/Partnership Reviews

In line with the Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships arrangements the key guidance for Safeguarding Practice Reviews (SPRs) (formally Serious Case Reviews) is *Working Together to Safeguard Children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children* (D; for Safeguarding Adult Boards (SABs) the Care Act 2015 introduced the requirement to undertake Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs). Domestic

Homicide Reviews (DHRs) were established on a statutory basis under Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004).

Safeguarding activity across our key partners and local authorities continues to demonstrate year on year increase in activity.

Throughout April 22 to March 23, SECamb were asked to contribute a total of 128 Summaries of Involvement to commissioning Safeguarding Boards and Community Safety Partnerships this is an increase of 74 on the previous year.

The number broken down into each local authority is:

- 4 Brighton and Hove Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- 1 Safeguarding Adult Review
- 3 East Sussex Safeguarding Adult Reviews
- 2 East Sussex Domestic Homicide Review
- 2 Safeguarding Practice Review/Rapid Reviews Children East Sussex
- 14 Domestic Homicide Review Surrey
- 5 Safeguarding Practice Reviews/Rapid Reviews Surrey
- 13- Safeguarding Adult reviews Surrey
- 4 Rapid Review/Safeguarding Practice Reviews West Sussex
- 1 Safeguarding Adult Review West Sussex
- 7 Domestic Homicide Reviews Kent
- 1 Safeguarding Practice Reviews/Rapid Reviews Kent
- 39 Safeguarding Adult Reviews Kent

Areas of wider learning following these reviews have been shared across the organisation using various methods, including training examples, to cascade.

9. Safer Recruitment and Retention of Staff

The Trust's Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure confirms that all job descriptions include a statement on the roles and responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse and neglect. The safeguarding statement in all job descriptions consider the work of all staff and volunteers throughout the organisation. All contracted services or individuals that work in regulated activity for the Trust follow safer recruitment processes.

In line with commissioning standards for safeguarding, SECamb has a process in place to respond to positive Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) concerns. All cases whereby a disclosure is made or a DBS check identifies previous convictions/cautions etc. will be reviewed by the DBS panel. The panel is chaired by a senior HR representative, and vice-chaired by the Safeguarding Lead, with expert input from HR, Operations, EOC, 111 and Community Resilience panel members. Occasionally the panel will draw upon expertise from other disciplines, such as Driving Standards or the Mental Health team. The HR representative will ensure that the decisions made, and the rationale for them, are captured, shared in a timely manner and held securely.

The Trust has excellent compliance (>99%) with all staff having a role appropriate DBS in place dated within the last 3 years and robust procedures to remove someone from practice should a member of staff fail to engage with DBS checking. Many NHS Trusts do not undertake repeat DBS checks of staff following their appointment, but SECamb continues to undertake regular checks as a responsible measure to safeguard the public from harm.

10. Managing Safeguarding Allegations Involving Members of Staff

SECamb is required to adhere to statutory guidance in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, the Care Act 2014 and the Safeguarding Boards' multi-agency procedures. The Trust therefore has a duty to report any incident where a member of staff has behaved in a way that has or may have harmed a child/adult at risk, acted inappropriately towards a child/adult at risk or committed a criminal offence against or related to child/adult at risk.

The Trust's Managing Safeguarding Allegations policy and procedure sets out how SECamb manages any allegations against employees relating to the abuse of children and adults at risk.

This policy seeks to prevent and address abuse by those who work with both children and adults at risk, particularly children and adults who may be at increased risk and may be unable to protect themselves from harm because of their care and support needs.

The policy sets out the Trust's commitment to safeguarding children and adults from abuse and neglect and gives direction to enable the Trust to deliver an appropriate response. The procedures also clarify the actions that the Trust are expected to take in the event of the relevant external agencies including the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) if appropriate.

During 2022/23 the Trust received several allegations of a safeguarding nature that were overseen in accordance with the managing allegations policy and procedure. Notably there has been a decrease in the number of allegations overall, especially those relating to sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct (including cases of harassment, assault and rape) had been a statistically significant theme in 2021/22. This overall decrease may point to the positive impact of the 'Until it Stops' campaign delivered by the HR directorate.

Concerns escalated via the safeguarding route included:

- allegations of downloading indecent images of children
- staff members own children becoming subject to child protection proceedings
- perpetrating domestic abuse

All cases have been managed in line with the Managing Safeguarding Allegations policy with evidence that risk assessments were undertaken as per the Trust's Disciplinary Policy where concerns arose about the employee's behaviour occurring outside of their employment with the Trust.

Level 3 Safeguarding Training (which is provided to all registrants in the Trust and selected managers across the 111 and 999 contact centres) has been refreshed for 2022/23 and includes information for staff about identifying and raising incidents where there is a concern a colleague's conduct either at work or in their personal life may put adults or children at risk. Additionally, the on-call safeguarding practitioners have been called upon to provide expert support and advice to Trust managers when issues have been identified out of hours.

Assurance can be provided that Safeguarding involvement in allegations of a safeguarding nature ensures wider patient safety in supporting vulnerable individuals who suffered abuse because of a SECamb employee. Secondly, assurance can be provided that a senior member of the Safeguarding leadership team is consulted on cases appropriately. Thirdly, assurance can be provided that concerns are escalated to the police, LADO, CQC and

commissioners in a timely way. Finally, partnership working between Safeguarding, HR ensures that referrals were made to the DBS where appropriate.

11. Mental Capacity Act Policy

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) provides a legal basis for determining an individual's capacity to make decisions at the time they need to be made.

The Trust's MCA policy is for all staff working within SECamb who are involved in the care, treatment and support of people over the age of sixteen (living in England or Wales) who are unable to make some - or all - decisions for themselves.

The policy is designed primarily for all staff who have direct patient contact; however, all staff have a duty to act in accordance with the MCA.

During 2022/23 the trust's MCA policy and procedure has been reviewed and updated in line with national guidelines and terms. This has been done with support from external subject matter experts at Surrey Heartlands and Surrey CC alongside colleagues within the trust.

Liberty Protection Safeguards information continues to be delayed; however, the Safeguarding Team continue to work closely with system partners at ICB and NHS England level to ensure that the Trust remains well equipped to introduce the updated safeguards as and when they're nationally introduced.

12. Conclusion

During 2022/2023 there was increasing demand on the safeguarding function across the Trust. Safeguarding is 'everybody's responsibility'; the year has demonstrated new and innovative practices that embedded safeguarding approaches within other vital functions of the Trust's business and directorates. Continued partnership working with the Trust's key stakeholders demonstrates improved outcomes for vulnerable people across Kent, Medway, Surrey, and Sussex.

Learning from incidents, complaints and safeguarding reviews have allowed the team to contribute to organisational learning and the priorities for 2022/2023 will ensure that, despite the continued rise in the overall safeguarding activity, protection and learning will be central to the safeguarding function.