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4th February 2015

Thomas Moore
Health & Science Correspondent
Sky News

Email: Thomas.Moore@bskyb.com

Dear Mr Moore

I am writing in response to your enquiry under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) reference FOI/15/01/14.

You requested the following information:

In the four week period beginning Monday 15th December 2014 and ending Sunday 11th January:

1. How many hours of emergency vehicle operational time were lost to handover delays in excess of 15 minutes?

The number of hours of emergency vehicle operation time lost was 3181.6. This figure is not the total time lost, it is the time lost for those cases where patient handover is recorded which is 80.9% - 28,169 of 34,802 handovers in the specified time period.

2. How many incidents were there of handover delays a) of between 30 and 60 minutes b) in excess of 60 minutes?

Please see the attached document which shows the number of patients handed over to each hospital, the total number of recorded patient handovers and the number of patients waiting longer than 30 minutes and longer than 60 minutes. I have to make you aware that this data is unvalidated and has not been agreed with the hospitals.

3. How many crewed emergency vehicles were hired from a) Private Ambulance Services b) Voluntary Ambulance Services between the specified dates?

I have to advise that I am unable to provide this information on the basis of the exemption contained within s43 (2) of the FOI Act (Commercial Interests). The Trust accepts that there is a public interest in how public money is spent; however there is also a need to withhold information that would prejudice the commercial interest of the Trust and/ or third parties. In assessing the public interest, the Trust takes the view that this would be the case in this instance. The Trust considers that this information, in conjunction with other information that might already or will be in the public domain, could lead to the commercial interests of the Trust together with the companies we use being adversely affected.

4. What was the total spend on a) PAS b) VAS between the specified dates?

We are continuing to look at ways in which we can reduce our reliance on the use of private ambulance services and always prioritise using our own staff whenever possible. However, along with all ambulance services nationally, South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECAmb) does use private ambulance providers when faced with high levels of demand, when experiencing high call volume or during periods of bad weather.

We have robust governance arrangements in place for the procurement of private ambulance services. While working on our behalf any private provider will be subject to a continuous monitoring and assessment process, to ensure they are providing a high level of service.

The total spend on Private Ambulance Providers during the period specified above was £ 919,000.00.

The total spend on Voluntary Ambulance Services during the period specified above was £ 74,000.00.

5. What was the most you spent hiring a crewed emergency vehicle for a particular shift?

I have to advise that I am unable to provide any information on the basis of the exemption contained within s43 (2) of the FOI Act (Commercial Interests). The Trust accepts that there is a public interest in how public money is spent; however there is also a need to withhold information that would prejudice the commercial interest of the Trust and/ or third parties. In assessing the public interest, the Trust takes the view that this would be the case in this instance. The Trust considers that this information, in conjunction with other information that might already or will be in the public domain, could lead to the commercial interests of the Trust together with the companies we use being adversely affected.

6. On how many occasions was a) a Fire Brigade vehicle b) police service vehicle dispatched to a patient needing emergency medical care?

We do not hold this information.

I hope you find this information helpful.

If, for whatever reason you are unhappy with our response, you are entitled to pursue any dissatisfaction through South East Coast Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust's (SECAMB) Internal Review Procedure at:

South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust
40-42 Friars Walk
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 2XW
Email: complaints@secamb.nhs.uk

Should you remain unhappy with the outcome of any such internal review, you may request a decision from the Information Commissioner at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

If I can be of further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me, quoting the above reference number.

Yours sincerely

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