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Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 2XW

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2nd March 2015

Email:

Dear

I am writing in response to your enquiry under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) reference FOI/15/02/11.

You requested the following information:

I am writing under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and I would like access to the following information:

A list of all times private minicab and/or licensed black taxi firms were called by control centre operatives, paramedics or any employees of your ambulance service to respond to a patient who had made a 999 call in the last 12 months with the intention of taking them to hospital for further treatment.

Could the response please include the following data fields:

- i) the category of the call**
- ii) response time**
- iii) destination of the cab journey, i.e. A&E department**
- iii) the name of the cab company used in each instance**
- iii) summary details of the original 999 call and any subsequent call to the local A+E department**

I am unable to provide a summary of the original call as the details attached are recovered based on the taxi call sign and are duplicated from the original call. I regret to advise that we cannot provide any further information as requested on the grounds of the exemption contained within s.12 of the FOIA. To retrieve the information would necessitate manually searching through each of the 77 calls to retrieve the original reference number and recover each call summary manually. This would exceed the appropriate limit of 18 hours as set down in the guidance on the application of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees).

SECamb makes use of approved taxi companies to convey patients at times of peak demand where there is no medical need for an assessment at scene or ongoing clinical care when a patient is being transported to hospital.

Patients would have received a triage by a trained call handler and if the outcome of this assessment is for the patient to make their own way to a health care facility and for some reason they can't carry out that instruction but are able to travel in a car, the call would be referred to a Clinical Supervisor for assessment. The ambulance service has a duty of care to ensure patients are able to receive care even if there are social barriers to them getting help. The Clinical Supervisor would discuss with the patient what options are available to get to hospital and as a last resort a taxi would be booked if suitable to avoid an ambulance being used as a purpose of transport only.

The Trust also makes use of taxis where a GP or other health care professional has decided transport to hospital is required but patient can be deemed as self-mobilising and not in need of medical care during the transfer to hospital, very often the same social barriers exist that prevent the GP arranging alternative methods. It would be agreed at the time of call with the GP/HCP if the patient was suitable for a taxi.

The data provided details the response time limit in minutes, all calls are classified as HCP admission as they are either booked by a Clinical Supervisor in the ambulance Emergency Operations Centres, GP or other Health Care Professional, the response time, i.e. time from booking made to time taxi arrived is recorded, together with the destination hospital.

In the last 12 months 77 taxi journeys have been provided by taxi, and usually occur during periods of escalation or peak demand. This figure needs to be seen in the context of the total number of calls we receive which is approximately 800,000 per year.

We have adhoc arrangements with 2 local taxi firms that have drivers that have CRB checked staff. We cannot provide individual breakdown by automated method, but one provider is based in Woking, Woking Taxis and one is in Horley, DSM Taxis and work is allocated on a geographic basis by general rule.

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