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17th March 2015

Email:

Dear

I am writing in response to your enquiry under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) reference FOI/15/02/23.

You requested the following information:

I am writing to make a Freedom of Information request for copies of correspondence with hospital Trusts making reference to concerns over delays off-loading patients at A&E departments.

More specifically, please provide copies of correspondence (including but not limited to emails, letters, memos, faxes, etc.) sent between 1 September 2014 and 15 February 2015 by any management-level representative of the ambulance service to any hospital Trusts you serve, making reference to concerns over delays off-loading patients at A&E departments.

Please find attached a redacted copy of an email sent from our Director of Commercial Services to hospitals in our area in connection with handover delays being incurred at these hospitals. This email was sent in the period referred to in your question above.

The new handover policy is an escalation policy only and since its introduction late last year, the discussions between our and hospital managers have commenced very few times. The policy will only be used on occasions when it is deemed absolutely necessary.

A number of criteria have to be met before we invoke the policy, including our ability to respond to emergency calls in the area, the duration and number of delays and the likelihood of the situation resolving promptly.

Similar policies already exist in other areas of the country and the policy is about ensuring the means are in place for us to continue to respond to patients awaiting a 999 response in the community.

We need to balance the needs of the patients who are ultimately in the care of the hospital, with those patients out in the community who have called 999 for emergency medical assistance and who we will struggle to respond to if all our resources are tied up at hospital.

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