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23rd March 2015

Email:

Dear

I am writing in response to your enquiry under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) reference FOI/15/03/07.

You requested the following information:

What was the longest time taken to respond (ie reach the patient) to a 'red' call between 1 November 2014 and the end of February 2015? Please exclude cases where the red call was downgraded to a lower level of urgency before the patient was reached.

Please give the date, location and suspected condition/age of patient and time involved eg ambulance called to High Street, Anytown, suspected cardiac arrest in 60-yr-old male on 1.1.2015 at 12 noon. Took 23 mins to arrive

Please also provide the same information for the period Nov 1 2013 to Feb 28 2014 and also Nov 1 2010 to Feb 28 2011.

South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECamb) has a 'national target' to respond to 75% of 'Red 1' (life-threatening - cardiac) and Red 2 (life-threatening – other) category incidents within 8 minutes. It also has a 'national target' for a transportable resource to arrive within 19 minutes of it being requested.

Please note that we do not have differential response time targets as such, for the various geographical areas in SECamb; our response times will be affected by the geography and frequency of Red category incidents.

Variations on response times exist throughout the year for a number of reasons and this includes time of the year and how busy we are. Bank Holiday weekends, for example are always extremely busy for the ambulance service and our staff work very hard to ensure they reach patients as quickly as possible.

While response times are important, what is also vital is the treatment patients

receive once our clinicians arrive at the scene of an emergency. We are pleased that the government now places a greater emphasis on patient outcomes as well as response times. This is something we had been calling for, for a number of years.

Along with all parts of the NHS, SECamb has been and continues to be extremely busy. We recognise that there can be variation in our performance in terms of response times throughout the year. While every effort is made to meet our performance targets at all times, variation can exist because of challenging weather conditions or unanticipated increases in demand.

SECamb staff work extremely hard to meet this increase in demand and the Trust is committed to providing an excellent service to our patients across Kent, Surrey and Sussex.

I would like to stress that we continually look at ways to ensure that we meet our performance standards even at a local level and will look into cases which have longer than average response times to establish whether more can be done to get to patients quicker.

The longest time respond to a red 2 call between 1st November 2014 and 28th February 2015 was 1 hour and 16 minutes. The delay in arrival was due to high demand for ambulances in the Crawley area. Please note that a call may start as a lower category but then be upgraded. We are unable to issue further details as this could provide patient identifiable information.

The longest time respond to a red 2 call between 1st November 2013 and 28th February 2014 was 1 hour and 35 minutes. The delay in arrival was due to high demand for ambulances in the Brighton area. Please note that a call may start as a lower category but then be upgraded. We are unable to issue further details as this could provide patient identifiable information.

The longest time respond to a category A call between 1st November 2010 and 28th February 2011 was 3 hours and 5 minutes. The delay in arrival was due to high demand for ambulances and adverse weather conditions in East Sussex. We are unable to issue further details as this could provide patient identifiable information

What was the longest time between a crew arriving at a hospital and being able to transfer responsibility for the patient to hospital staff during this same time period?

Please state the date, time and the hospital involved *eg ambulance arrived at Anytown Hospital 12 noon on 1.1.2015 patient handed over to hospital staff at 4pm*

Please also provide the same information for the period Nov 1 2013 to Feb 28 2014 and also Nov 1 2010 to Feb 28 2011.

I'm sorry but I am unable to provide all of the information you are requesting as South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECamb) does not hold complete data sets for the period requested for 'handover' times which record the time the ambulance arrives at hospital to the time the ambulance staff hand over the patient to A & E staff.

We only hold robust data on handover times from April 2013 when financial penalties were introduced for hospitals breaching the 30 minutes and 60 minute handover times. Prior to this we only monitored ambulance turnaround times (arrival to clear for next job).

I would like to stress that the NHS as a whole was extremely busy over the winter months and we have been working closely with our colleagues in the acute sector to ensure patients are handed over as swiftly as possible.

We cannot therefore provide the longest handover time for the period from 1st November 2010 to 28th February 2011.

The longest handover time for the period from 1st November 2013 to 28th February 28th 2014 was 3 hours and 53 minutes and took place at Royal Surrey County Hospital.

The longest handover time for the period from 1st November 2014 to 28th February 2015 was 4 hours and 18 minutes and took place at Worthing 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