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Lewes  
East Sussex  
BN7 2XW

[foi@secamb.nhs.uk](mailto:foi@secamb.nhs.uk)

11th November 2016

Email:

Dear

I am writing in response to your enquiry under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) reference FOI/16/10/26

You requested the following information:

**\* The total number of 999 emergency calls made to the South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Trust over the last five years, divided by year 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011. (Or by equivalent financial years)**

Please see the attached spreadsheet which shows the number of calls received by our primary and secondary 999 lines in our Emergency Operations Centres. This is part of the nationally recognised Ambulance Quality Indicators.

The figures on the spreadsheet exclude a significant proportion of our activity:

- Electronically transferred incidents to our service from NHS111
- Calls made to our specialist lines for Police, Fire, Coast guard etc
- Non-call activity – such as when an ambulance comes upon a patient – and raises the incident directly with our EOC (not via the 999 line).

**\* The number of 999 emergency calls classified as hoaxes made to the South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Trust over the last five years, divided by year 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011. (Or by equivalent financial years).**

Unfortunately we do not hold this data. The vast majority of calls are genuine or made in good faith and the Trust treats all calls seriously. However, on occasion we may receive a call and dispatch an ambulance where there is either nobody at the scene or the person at the address denies making the call. For example a member of the public might make a call in the genuine belief that someone needs our assistance but the potential patient might leave the scene before an ambulance arrives.

Therefore, unfortunately we are unable to confirm the numbers of hoax calls received as we cannot be sure that they really are hoax calls.

**\* The number of 999 calls made by frequent callers to the South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Trust over the last five years, divided by year 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011. (Or by equivalent financial years).**

The overwhelming majority of Individuals or organisations who access the 999 or 111 systems that the South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECamb) provide do so with legitimate healthcare requirements.

The identification and management of those who access emergency and urgent healthcare at an abnormally high level, could lead to the identification of individuals who are at risk, vulnerable or have an unmet health or social care need. We do not associate the term “Hoax” or “Timewasting” with this patient cohort.

The Trust uses the following definition of a Frequent Caller to the Service – “A Frequent Caller is defined by the Ambulance Service Frequent Caller National Network (FreCaNN) as someone aged 18 or over who makes 5 or more emergency calls related to individual episodes of care in a month, or 12 or more emergency calls related to individual episodes of care in 3 months from a private dwelling.

The Trust has shown significant success of the strategies we have employed to manage the complex needs of a relatively small pool of frequent callers with a significant reduction in call volume in comparison to the previous financial year.

These strategies include making effective use of the clinical supervisors in the Emergency Operations Centres, skilled paramedics and nurses specialising in the management of a wide range of conditions which do not necessarily require an emergency ambulance response who are able to assess and plan the care of individuals, providing appropriate referral to the patient’s own GP for example.

In addition to the significant contribution by our clinicians in the Emergency Operations Centres, the Trust is actively involved at a national and regional level in ensuring a consistent approach to managing frequent callers and ensuring that the manner in which we support these often vulnerable people meets their individual needs without having an impact on the wider service.

Our approach to providing care to frequent callers involves a whole-system approach and includes GPs, community services and commissioners, which we support with the use of special notes and systems such as IBIS (Intelligence Based Information System), which has been developed and is managed by SECamb.

We are only able to provide data for the 2015 -2016 financial year as this information was not collected prior to this date.

	Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4		
TRUSTWIDE	Apr-15	May-15	Jun-15	Jul-15	Aug-15	Sep-15	Oct-15	Nov-15	Dec-15	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16
Frequent Callers	405	384	410	418	408	426	395	405	427	444	407	427
Number of Calls 1 Month	2730	2579	2699	2793	2790	2802	2732	2680	3040	3098	2736	2833
Trustwide FC 999 Activity	3.82%	3.72%	3.78%	3.86%	3.88%	3.97%	3.79%	3.73%	3.83%	3.90%	3.64%	3.53%

**\* The number of frequent callers to the 999 emergency service in your area. For this we are using the national definition of callers who have made more than 5 calls in a month or more than 12 calls in three months. We would like these figures divided by year 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011. (Or by equivalent financial years).**

We are only able to provide data for the 2015 -2016 financial year as this information was not collected prior to this date.

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TRUSTWIDE	Apr-15	May-15	Jun-15	Jul-15	Aug-15	Sep-15	Oct-15	Nov-15	Dec-15	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16
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**\* If you have a frequent callers unit - or equivalent - please provide details of the number of cases that have been referred to the unit divided by year 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011. (Or by equivalent financial years).**

We do not have a frequent caller unit however 44% of all of our current active frequent callers have an individual care plan in place, provided by health and social care partners working with the patient such as GPs and community teams. This is an increase from 31% of care plan in place for active frequent callers a year ago.

**\* The average cost to the South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Trust for answering an emergency call (and associated response, such as an ambulance being sent out or someone being conveyed to hospital). We would like to know if you get paid a single flat rate for all emergency calls – or whether there are different rates based on the degree of response.**

We do not hold this information as each incident is different and therefore we cannot provide a response to this question.

**\* The estimated financial cost of hoax/time-wasting calls to your ambulance service for the last five full years (divided by year or financial year)**

As previously explained we do not collect information regarding “Hoax” or “Timewasting” calls.

**\* We would like a list of your most prolific frequent callers over the last 5 years – those who have made the most frequent 999 calls. We understand that you will not be able to provide us with names, however please give us the area that the repeat offender comes from and the number of calls they have made. If possible we would like the number of calls for the the top ten frequent callers.**

We can only provide data for 2015/2016 as prior to this we did not record this information.

Source address	Number of calls
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Maidstone, Kent	595
Hove, East Sussex	521
Tonbridge, Kent	467
Swanscombe, Kent	446
Caterham, Surrey	416
Brighton, East Sussex	289
Polegate, East Sussex	274
Hove, East Sussex	225
Dover, Kent	218
Gravesend, Kent	217

**\* Details of all initiatives that the South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Trust is involved in with regard to hoax/ frequent caller prevention.**

Two out of 22 Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in the region commissioned Quality and Innovation milestones in relation to frequent callers in 2015/16. This resulted in the creation of a nationally adapted staged approach for local clinical managers to utilise a toolkit to identify and manage frequent callers in the areas that they are responsible for. Having been successfully trialled during 2015/16 a project is now underway to roll out the process across the rest of the Trusts operational area.

An Ambulance Service Frequent Caller Lead Manager has been in post since August 2015. Our Emergency Operations Centre staff are now able to identify all frequently calling addresses to provide a baseline and Trust wide governance "best practice" guidelines are now in place in how best to care for this patient group.

**\* A list of organisations that the South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Trust works with in the prevention of hoax/ 999 frequent callers.**

The Trust works alongside all NHS health and local authority social care partners to provide care for frequent callers to our service across the 22 clinical commissioning groups that we serve. This includes acute hospital Trusts, community teams and General Practitioners as appropriate.

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](mailto: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