

**Health and Adult Social Care
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
BRIEFING NOTE – No. 3/23

Date: 12 June 2023

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: At the January 2023 meeting of the Committee Members considered an [update from the South East Coast Ambulance Service](#). At this meeting, the Committee requested a briefing paper on safeguarding and also further information on performance, including Category 4 999 calls.

1. Performance:

1.1. Trust 999 performance for April 2023:

- Category 1 (C1) 'mean' time of 00:08:22 (England mean 00:08:07) and positioned 7th out of the 10 Trusts measured against a target of 00:07:00.
- C1 90th percentile was 00:15:17 and positioned 7th against a target of 00:15:00.
- Category 2 (C2) 'mean' was 00:24:43 (England mean 00:28:35) against a target of 00:18:00 and positioned 4th.
- C2 90th percentile was 00:50:19 against a target of 00:40:00.
- Category 3 (C3) 'mean' of 01:47:33 (England 01:30:55) against a target of 00:02:00 and positioned 9th.
- C3 90th percentile was 03:56:44 (England 03:32:57) and positioned 9th.
- Category 4 (C4) 'mean' 02:04:31 (England mean 01:54:16) and positioned 9th.
- Category 4 (C4) 90th percentile was 04:41:20 (England 04:24:55) and positioned 8th.

Whilst these results are still below the required quality indicators, it is noted that performance is above the national average for C2 and response times, overall, have improved since the last update to the Committee in January 2023.

1.2. 999 call answering times during April were 12 seconds against a target of 5 seconds. When compared to a national average of 7 seconds for 'mean' answering times, the Trust was in 9th position. It was a similar picture for the 90th percentile with the Trust answering calls at 33 seconds 'mean'

compared to a national average of 20 seconds. Again, the Trust was in 9th position. This is a significant improvement over the winter months and an ongoing recruitment programme is continuing to maintain the levels of staffing in the Emergency Operations Centre with the aim to improve this further.

- 1.3. Response times across Medway for April have also improved with a Category 1 response time of 00:06:30 'mean' (against an 00:07:00 indicator) and 00:10:50 90th percentile, both within the Ambulance Quality Indicators.
- 1.4. Category 2 response times 00:20:46 'mean' and 00:41:59 90th percentile.
- 1.5. Both these categories being better than the overall Trust performance totals.
2. Safeguarding:
 - 2.1 Safeguarding is a vital process that protects children and adults from harm, abuse and neglect. The safety and wellbeing of adults and children is important as they encounter the services that SECAMB's 999 and 111 provide. SECAMB reinforces the principle that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and develops a culture of continuous learning and improvement to promote the safety and welfare of adults at risk, children and young people and looked after children.
 - 2.2 In 2022/23, a total of approximately 28,500 referrals were received across the NHS111 and 999 services: 23,000 for adults and 5,500 for children. This equates to an increase of 20 per cent compared to the previous year. Throughout 2022/23 the Safeguarding Team have noticed seasonal variances in safeguarding concerns. For example, the autumn and early winter months of 2022 noted a 35% increase in referrals for children compared to the same period the previous year; the Trust also noted a 12% increase in referrals for adults at risk. Key reasons for referral trends include and highlight:
 - Possible lowering of referral thresholds for children
 - Significant increase in children's mental health concerns
 - Possible raising of thresholds for adults resulting in higher acuity referrals
 - Month on month doubling of environmental and poor housing conditions
 - Evidence of increasing childhood neglect because of 'heating v. eating' challenges
 - Concerns include impact of deteriorating respiratory function, malnutrition and poor housing, mould etc.
 - 50:50 spread of older and frail population and children with underlying health conditions

- 1.6. All referrals continue to be reviewed by members of the Safeguarding team before forwarding to the relevant local authority. Over the past four years the Trust has seen a 75% rise in safeguarding referral numbers.
- 1.7. Although it's difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons that explain such a considerable rise, contributing factors would include:
- The increased profile of Safeguarding across the organisation.
 - Impact of rolling out comprehensive Safeguarding training and education programmes across the trust.
 - Transfer of the commissioned NHS111 service to SECAMB four years ago with the subsequent increase in associated safeguarding workload.
 - Increased expectation of detecting and reporting safeguarding concerns.
 - Greater multi-agency focus on new and developing areas of preventative areas of safeguarding, for example, referrals requesting early help assessments for children, young people and their families.
 - Safeguarding Adult Reviews focusing on escalating risks developing from unaddressed low level care needs.
 - Lack of alternative referral pathways (especially out of hours) for low acuity social concerns, especially those that will become high acuity without an opportunity for early intervention.
 - Pressures across society because of the increased cost of living, particularly in areas of higher socioeconomic need.
 - A system wide and contractual expectation paramedics (and other registrants) receive far more in-depth Safeguarding training from 2019.
- 1.8. Emerging themes will continue to contribute to this upward trajectory, for example in recent months the Safeguarding Team have noted a substantial increase in concerns regards lack of adequate heating and nutrition that appears to be linked to the cost-of-living crisis, an observation supported across the wider system.
- 1.9. Scrutiny of safeguarding practice demonstrates a very strong safeguarding reporting culture throughout the organisation. The recognition by the SECAMB workforce of the increasing care needs across a frail and vulnerable population are highlighted clearly in the safeguarding referrals received by the Safeguarding team. Although a portion of initial concerns may not be overtly safeguarding, a review of a patients care needs by social care can often identify other concerns such as inadequate care provision or identifying other unmet needs. Continued inadequate care provision can often lead to poor health outcomes leading to the possibility of more emergency and, urgent care being required.

- 1.10. Care needs are recognised in 39% of referrals made by the SECAmb workforce across its 111 and 999 services. However, further scrutiny of the figures suggests that 60% of these referrals have a recognised primary or secondary safeguarding concern attributable to self-neglect, mental health, neglect, access to early help, domestic abuse, or other risk category. From the information recorded on Datix by the Safeguarding team, the data indicates that less than 15% of total safeguarding referrals are solely highlighting the increasing care needs and risks experienced by patients.
- 1.11. Analysis of the Safeguarding reporting dashboard demonstrates a consistent level of reporting across the trust. Services provided by EOC and 111 call centres account for up to 36% of safeguarding referrals for this year: an increase of 3% on last year. Given the 'front door' nature of the workload within the call centres it's unsurprising that safeguarding concerns are identified within the patient triage system and escalated accordingly.
- 1.12. Field Operation services across the trust escalate approximately 58% of safeguarding referrals; closer scrutiny of the data generally reflects a consistent pattern in the proportion of referrals received from each Operating Unit (OU). Analysis of reporting figures in 2022/23 compared to the previous year identify that in most services and OUs there was less than a 1.5% increase or decrease in the proportion of referrals made to the safeguarding team. The highest swings in referral data highlighted a proportionate increase of 1.7% in referrals from Paddock Wood and a proportionate reduction of 2.3% in referrals from Medway & Dartford OU.
- 1.13. Update on training information for 2022/23:
 - In early 2022 the Trust's Executive Management Board agreed to suspend face to face Level 3 Safeguarding training because of the unprecedented operational demand caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Outlined in the 2022 CQC report was the requirement to improve safeguarding training and to ensure that all staff complete mandatory safeguarding training in line with the trust target.
 - During June 2022 agreement was reached with senior operational leaders to reintroduce the training across the Trust from September 22nd, 2022. The training is delivered by four members of the Safeguarding team and consists of a session over Microsoft Teams focusing on adults and children's safeguarding that's in line with the competency framework outlined in the nationally adopted multi-agency Intercollegiate Document.
- 1.14. Total L3 compliance level at the beginning of September 2022 was at 55%. Commissioning requirements for Safeguarding expect a minimum 85% compliance across provider services. As of 1st March 2023, a total of 1,878

clinicians out of a total of approximately 2,220 (85%) are in date with their L3 Safeguarding training.

- 1.15. Throughout 2023/24 plans are in place to ensure that L3 safeguarding training compliance remains high across the trust's services in NHS111, EOC and field operations.

Contact Details:

Ray Savage, Head of Strategic Partnerships and System Engagement, SECAmb
ray.savage@secamb.nhs.uk