



To: Ms A Crawford
HM Assistant Coroner for Surrey

Thursday, 10 August 2023

By email only

14 August 2023

Trust Headquarters
Nexus House
4 Gatwick Road
Crawley
West Sussex
RH10 9BG

Tel: 0300 123 0999
www.secamb.nhs.uk

Dear Madam

Inquests touching the deaths of Mr Keith Nielsen and Mr Ginger Wright

Thank you for providing SECamb with an opportunity to submit the response to the prevention of future death reports, following the conclusion of the inquests for Mr Nielsen and Mr Wright.

I was saddened to hear of these incidents, and I would like to offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Mr Nielsen and Mr Wright.

I note your concern is that *“SECamb is regularly operating at Stage 4 of its Surge Management Plan, meaning that demand for the service is significantly outstripping available resources and the service is not capable of responding to calls within target timeframes”*.

South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECamb) was commissioned in 2017-18 to provide the 999-emergency service across the three full counties of Kent, Surrey and Sussex, and only part of Hampshire (North-East Hampshire). The scope, size and structure of the service was commissioned based on a comprehensive demand and capacity review undertaken in collaboration with an external organisation based on data from previous years of delivery and planning assumptions.

Prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic SECamb was performing more favourably against Ambulance Response Programme (ARP) targets, however not consistently meeting all targets. Since early 2019 to the present day, there have been several notable changes in both the way that the public uses the service as well as how the service is operated as part of the wider healthcare environment. Both factors are included in the current development of a new Trust strategy which will be accompanied with a new care delivery model agreed by key stakeholders.

The data shows that there has been a change in demand, and in the profile of patient types, with a significant increase in the proportion of higher acuity/more complex calls, requiring additional resource and clinical expertise. Factors contributing to this

challenge include population growth in the southeast, demographic shifts and an aging population. In addition, the pattern of demand is now less aligned to the model commissioned following the review in 2017-18 – whilst rota patterns have been adjusted to improve this alignment, additional staffing numbers are required to meet the change in demand.

It is recognised that to support the improvement needed not only in the ambulance service, but also across other health and care providers, system solutions are required so that patient care and flow can be provided in not only the best way possible for the patient, but to also maximise efficiencies across Integrated Care Systems (ICSs). With ICSs becoming legally established in July 2022, this has changed the way Health and Social Care providers work collaboratively and plan delivery of services to their populations, with an increasing focus on public health, improving performance against national and local requirements, and recognising the need for integrated strategies for key areas such as workforce (linked to the recently published [NHS Long Term Workforce Plan](#)).

Specifically related to the 2023-24 financial year, SECAmb will continue to work with partners on local and national programmes of work to meet the functional demand and clinical level of support that the public expects. Focus has been specified by NHS England on three functional areas that are:

- Call handling – to achieve the ARP performance targets.
- ARP Category 2 (C2) mean response time– in recognition of the national performance position, all ambulance trusts to deliver a C2 mean performance of a maximum of 30mins by the end of the financial year,
- Hospital handover times – to deliver significant improvement to remove 60min+ handovers and reduce overall handover time and lost hours at hospital due to extended handover times.

Whilst SECAmb will continue to focus attention to optimise performance within the current commissioned service, it is recognised that to deliver comprehensive and sustainable improvement a full system-wide review in conjunction with external stakeholders is required, which in turn will lead to a model of care delivery that addresses the current and future requirements of the public across Kent, Surrey, Sussex, and North-East Hampshire.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

Executive Director of Quality and Nursing (interim)
on behalf of Simon Weldon Chief Executive Officer
South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust