



South Central Ambulance Service NHS Trust
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PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Darren Salter
HM Senior Coroner for Oxfordshire
Via email only ([REDACTED])

26th March 2025

Dear Mr Salter,

I am writing to you in response to the concerns that you highlighted following the inquest hearing into the very sad death of Wyllow-Raine Lawson Swinburn that concluded on 2nd December 2024. Thank you for allowing us the time to review and respond to your concerns.

To confirm, your Regulation 28 report detailed your concerns regarding the time that it took for the 999 call made on 30th September 2022 to be answered and the time that it took for an ambulance to arrive at Wyllow-Raine's home address. You confirmed that your primary concern related to the time that it took for the 999 call to be answered. However, I will cover both concerns within this letter to offer you reassurance that the Trust is doing all that it can to provide a safe and responsive service for the communities that we serve.

Thank you for recognising the significant improvements that the Trust had already made by the time the case came to be heard within your Regulation 28 report. The safety of our patients is of paramount importance to the Trust, and we will always actively seek to make improvements where we can.

In relation to call answer time, you are already familiar with the critical call process available where a BT operative becomes aware of, or is informed of, a time critical situation from the evidence provided to you for the inquest by both SCAS and BT. I have therefore not covered this within my letter but can confirm that this process remains in place.

Since December 2023, the Trust has introduced a Fit for the Future programme (FFF). Under this programme the Trust has initiated an improved way of working in various areas of our workforce. The improvements are designed to ensure that we provide our patients with the care that they need safely and effectively in a timely way.

Improvements made within our Clinical Coordination Centre (CCC)

Within the CCC we have undertaken the following work in addition to the work that you have already been informed of via evidence for the hearing:

- We have commenced a remodelling exercise to identify the number of Emergency Call Takers (ECTs) required to deliver a reliable service for the operational demand that we are working to. The increase in call answering ability has resulted in a significant decrease in our average call answer time. As explained to you at the inquest hearing, comparing September 2022 to September 2024, the average call answer time fell from 50 seconds to 10 seconds. In January 2025, this had reduced further to an average call answer time of 8 seconds.

- The Association of Ambulance Chief Executives (AACE) is supporting us whilst we are undertaking our improvement plan. The plan is designed to improve call answer times, redesign our rotas, increase the spread of shifts to minimise shift changeover shortages, increase clinical support in the CCC to support ECTs and prioritise early clinical intervention in more complex cases.
- We have commissioned an external organisation, ORH, to review our CCC staffing capacity modelling to ensure we have the correct skill set and operational model which is fit for the future.
- We are continuing to work in partnership with the Isle of Wight NHS Trust to increase ECT numbers and availability.
- We are refreshing our dispatch models to ensure multiple vehicles are not dispatched to an incident to maintain resource availability. This refresh will include a review of the need for continued deployment of a rapid response vehicle when an ambulance arrives.
- We are improving the training and mentorship model for the CCC and have recruited staff internationally to increase clinical support in the room.

Improvements made to road operations:

- To provide additional senior leadership for our operational workforce, we have recruited a Chief Paramedic who sits on the Trust Board.
- As part of “Fit for the Future” we have put revised recruitment and retention plans in place to improve our staffing numbers and ensure the right staff are in the right posts to meet demand. In addition, we have undertaken a rota review and the majority of the new rotas are now in place
- We appointed a People Promise Manager and started exemplar programmes to improve retention of frontline staff. Retention ensures that staff turnover is reduced, and we maintain a skilled workforce with knowledge and experience.
- We increased our paramedic apprenticeship numbers to increase the number of clinical staff that can respond to patients.
- We have reviewed the skill level of crews that are on our ambulances to ensure we have the appropriate skill mix on every resource depending on the incident they are being tasked to. We now have two types of resources, clinical and non-clinical, which are dispatched to patient’s dependent on their needs.
- We have increased the level of support and supervision we provide to newly qualified paramedics.
- Specialist Practitioners are used to provide additional clinical support and increase the use of other care pathways as an alternative to hospital conveyance where this would better suit the patient’s needs.
- The new joint process with our healthcare partners in relation to the amount of time an ambulance crew will wait at a hospital to handover their patient that was discussed at the inquest hearing has been successfully implemented with all hospitals within the SCAS geographical area. This has resulted in our Category 2 response times improving by 6 minutes to an average of 24 minutes in January and February 2025.

Improvements made to our fleet of vehicles:

- We are in the process of updating our fleet of vehicles to increase the reliability of our fleet and reduce occasions where vehicles are out of service or break down during operational use. A total of 124 new vehicles have been ordered, with 53 delivered by the end of 2024.

I hope that this letter has adequately addressed the concerns that you have raised. Please do let me know if you would like to be kept updated on the progress of our improvement programme.

Should you wish to discuss these matters further, please contact [REDACTED], Head of Legal Services at SCAS who will be able to arrange a time for us to meet.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Chief Executive