

Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	8 March 2016
Officer	Director for Adult and Community Services
Subject of Report	South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust – NHS 111 Service
Executive Summary	<p>This report focuses on the allegations made in the Daily Mail on 15 and 16 February 2016 about the NHS 111 service provided by the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT).</p> <p>SWASFT strongly refutes a number of allegations made in the newspaper articles. There are also actions that Sarah Hayes says she took, reported in the Daily Mail, for which SWASFT can find no paper trail or audit and an investigation in to the allegations made in the newspaper has been commissioned. This is due to start before the next Committee meeting.</p> <p>In addition the Care Quality Commission (CQC) is making an early inspection of SWASFT's NHS 111 services on Tuesday 8 and Wednesday 9 March. This standard inspection has been brought forward as a result of the claims made in the Daily Mail.</p>
Impact Assessment:	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment:</p> <p>Not applicable.</p> <hr/> <p>Use of Evidence:</p> <p>Report provided by South Western Ambulance Service NHS</p>

	Foundation Trust.
	Budget: Not applicable.
	Risk Assessment: Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council's approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as: Current Risk: LOW Residual Risk LOW
	Other Implications: None.
Recommendation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 That members consider and comment on the report. 2 That members nominate three individuals who would be willing to join an ad-hoc Joint Health Scrutiny Committee to consider the issues raised in this report, should the members of Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole's Committees which are responsible for health scrutiny wish to take the matter further. 3 That members nominate a substitute for the possible Joint Committee, should one of the three agreed nominees subsequently not be available on the required date(s).
Reason for Recommendation	The work of the Committee contributes to the County Council's aim to protect and enrich the health and wellbeing of Dorset's most vulnerable adults.
Appendices	None.
Background Papers	None.
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South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report focuses on the allegations made in the Daily Mail on 15 and 16 February 2016 about the NHS 111 service provided by the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT).
- 1.2 SWASFT strongly refutes a number of allegations made in the newspaper articles. There are also actions that Sarah Hayes says she took, reported in the Daily Mail, for which SWASFT can find no paper trail or audit and an investigation into the allegations made in the newspaper has been commissioned. This is due to start before the next Committee meeting.
- 1.3 In addition the Care Quality Commission (CQC) is making an early inspection of SWASFT's NHS 111 services on Tuesday 8 and Wednesday 9 March. This standard inspection has been brought forward as a result of the claims made in the Daily Mail.

2 The allegations

- 2.1 Patient care and safety remain top priorities for SWASFT. Wherever possible we have worked personally with the families involved in the cases referred to in the Daily Mail to ensure that all of their concerns were addressed. An apology and assurances have been issued to those families, and the Trust has thanked them for their input.
- 2.2 The Trust is proud of the work that its staff delivers day in, day out, and is fully confident of the robust procedures it has in place around the NHS 111 service. The Trust though does take any allegation seriously which is why it immediately commissioned an investigation.
 - As a supervisor within the NHS 111 service, the Trust was surprised and disappointed that Ms Hayes did not follow the Trust's well-established whistle-blowing process – 'Speak up, Speak out' – and that she has taken so long to make these allegations, as SWASFT actively encourages its staff to report any incidents of concern so that they can be fully investigated and lessons learned.
 - The Daily Mail made suggestions of a 'cover up'. As is standard practice, investigations into the circumstances of a serious incident may be published, but the Trust has a duty of care to patients and information will not be released to the media without the necessary permission of the family.

In this instance, in line with established processes and procedures, details of the incident reported in the national newspaper were shared with the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). A summary report was also shared with the CQC in line with national framework around reporting

- The Daily Mail made allegations around staffing and resourcing. The SWASFT service is not unsafe in relation to staffing and resourcing and is under ongoing scrutiny both internally and externally. There is always clinical cover. Additionally, the clinical hub (control room) in Dorset hosts a number of services including out of hours, 111 and 999, ensuring there is plenty of support available.

- The Daily Mail made allegations about non pathways advisers (NPAs). Patients are not put at risk with the use of NPAs. The introduction of NPAs was agreed with NHS England and NHS Pathways.

NPAs are call takers answering calls to the NHS 111 service for patients who do not require clinical assessment and have chosen from a series of automated options to help better direct their call.

The people working for SWASFT in this role are of all ages. The Trust focuses on whether an individual has a set of certain competencies and do not discriminate against age.

This role was not introduced as a performance measure, but to improve the experience of patients because not all callers need to go through the NHS Pathways system of questioning. Many people use the service to be signposted to other healthcare services and do not require formal assessment.

- The Daily Mail made allegations in relation to the death of William Mead and a SWASFT call handler. A full investigation was carried out into William's death by NHS England CQC and the SWASFT call handler's performance was not linked directly to the death of William. The work of several organisations came under scrutiny and the Trust acknowledged there was a missed opportunity to identify how unwell William was and formally apologised to Mr and Mrs Mead over the sad death of their son. We also worked closely with them during the investigation. The member of staff in question did not carry out any intentional or wilful act of neglect when carrying out his duties and therefore no formal disciplinary proceedings were required. The Trust is not aware of any performance related concerns raised about this call handler since the death of William Mead.
- The Daily Mail made suggestions that staff sleep while on duty. The Trust has not received any reports of 111 staff falling asleep prior to publication in the newspaper. SWASFT does not condone it and will be investigating the matter. SWASFT also expects all its staff, especially those in a supervisory role as Sarah Hayes was, to escalate and report any issues of this nature, but no evidence of this being reported can be found.

3 General information.

- 3.1 Of the total number of calls in 2015, Dorset 111 received 244,784, an increase of 1.5% over the previous year of 241,195 calls handled.
- 3.2 Dorset received on average 728 calls per day in December 2015. The highest average daily calls offered in 2015 was in May with 749 calls per day offered.
- 3.3 In December 2015 of the 1.36 million calls handled nationally, Dorset 111 answered 90% of their calls within 60 seconds. Above the England performance figure of 86.1%.
- 3.4 Last year the SWASFT NHS 111 service across the region answered 805,739 calls, six of which resulted in serious incident investigations which represents approximately 0.0007% of calls handled.

Please also note that the inspection of all Trust services in June is still going ahead as planned.

Louise Bowden,
Head of Marketing, PR and Communications,
South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust

March 2016