

**TO: HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
14 APRIL 2016**

**SOUTH CENTRAL AMBULANCE SERVICE
Assistant Chief Executive**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report invites the Health Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Panel to note the outcome of the investigation of media allegations concerning the 111 service operated by South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) NHS Foundation Trust.

2 RECOMMENDATION

That the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- 2.1 Notes the outcome of the investigation of media allegations concerning the 111 service operated by South Central Ambulance Service.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The NHS 111 service provided by SCAS is a telephone based service where patients are assessed, given advice or are directed to a local service that most appropriately meets their needs. For example, this could be an out-of-hours GP service, a NHS walk-in centre or urgent care centre, a community nurse, the emergency department at their local hospital, an emergency dentist, emergency ambulance or late opening chemist.
- 3.2 At its meeting on 2 July 2015, the Health O&S Panel met SCAS to discuss its performance and future plans. The minutes record:

The Panel was informed that following a recent undercover investigation of the 111 service by a Daily Telegraph journalist the Trust had launched an immediate investigation into the systems and practices criticised in the reports. The investigation was being conducted under the terms of the Trust's Whistle Blowing policy. The terms of reference for the investigation were still under development however it would be conducted by an independent reviewer supported by an investigator from the Service and would cover a number of areas including:

- *HR and recruitment*
- *Confidentiality and information governance standards*
- *Clinical governance and the operational safety of the service*
- *Investigation of the allegations made around the improper use of the 111 pathways*
- *Culture, leadership and behaviours.*

In addition, work was also taking place to audit all the calls handled by the journalist during her time at the call centre to categorically assure the service that all calls had been dealt with appropriately. An external audit of the Trust's internal investigation process was also being carried out.

The final report was expected within the next eight to ten weeks and it was agreed that an update would be brought to a future Panel meeting.

3.3 Officers followed this up with SCAS periodically. The investigation report could not be released until various steps had been taken, including an inspection by the Care Quality Commission of the SCAS 111 service. That CQC inspection reached positive conclusions about the 111 service (the report can be viewed at http://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/new_reports/AAAE8365.pdf).

3.4 The SCAS Investigation report was obtained and sent to Members on 5 February 2016. The Executive summary of that report was:

1.1 On 25 June 2015, SCAS was advised by the Daily Telegraph newspaper that one of their journalists ('Reporter 2') had secured employment working as a call taker for the NHS '111' service in the Clinical Coordination Centre in Northern House, Bicester. The individual concerned had been working with SCAS since 11 May 2015. She had been in training until 5 June 2015 and was then taking calls for seven shifts, during which some coaching had taken place. During this time she had undertaken some covert filming and recording of comments made by some members of SCAS staff.

1.2 The Daily Telegraph newspaper informed the Trust that it intended to publish an article based on their reporter's observations and invited the Trust to respond to a number of questions posed by Friday 26 June 2015. The Trust was unable to give a detailed response within that timeframe due to the complexity of the issues raised. In any event, the newspaper published an article in print and on its website the following Wednesday, 1 July 2015.

1.3 Of the seventeen questions posed by the newspaper, nine were based on misunderstandings or misinterpretations of information given to 'Reporter 2' about the Trust or the NHS Pathways system; four quoted and were based on incorrect information; one concerned a single incident that had already been concluded adequately; two were vague so it was not possible to investigate them further and one concerned a set of circumstances created by the reporter herself.

1.4 Most of the issues raised in the article in the newspaper and online referred to the questions sent on 25 June. The remainder relate to the subjective interpretation of comments made by various members of SCAS staff during the period of 'Reporter 2's' training and subsequent deployment in the Clinical Coordination Centre in Bicester.

1.5 Of the specific issues raised by the newspaper, none were substantiated that would give a significant cause for concern over the safety of the service that the Trust provides. This is externally reviewed by the Commissioning Clinical Governance GP leads on a regular monthly basis. However, other issues were identified during the course of the investigation which did give cause for concern.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS/ EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT/ STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES / OTHER OFFICERS/ CONSULTATION – Not applicable

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