



Patient Experience Annual Report

1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025

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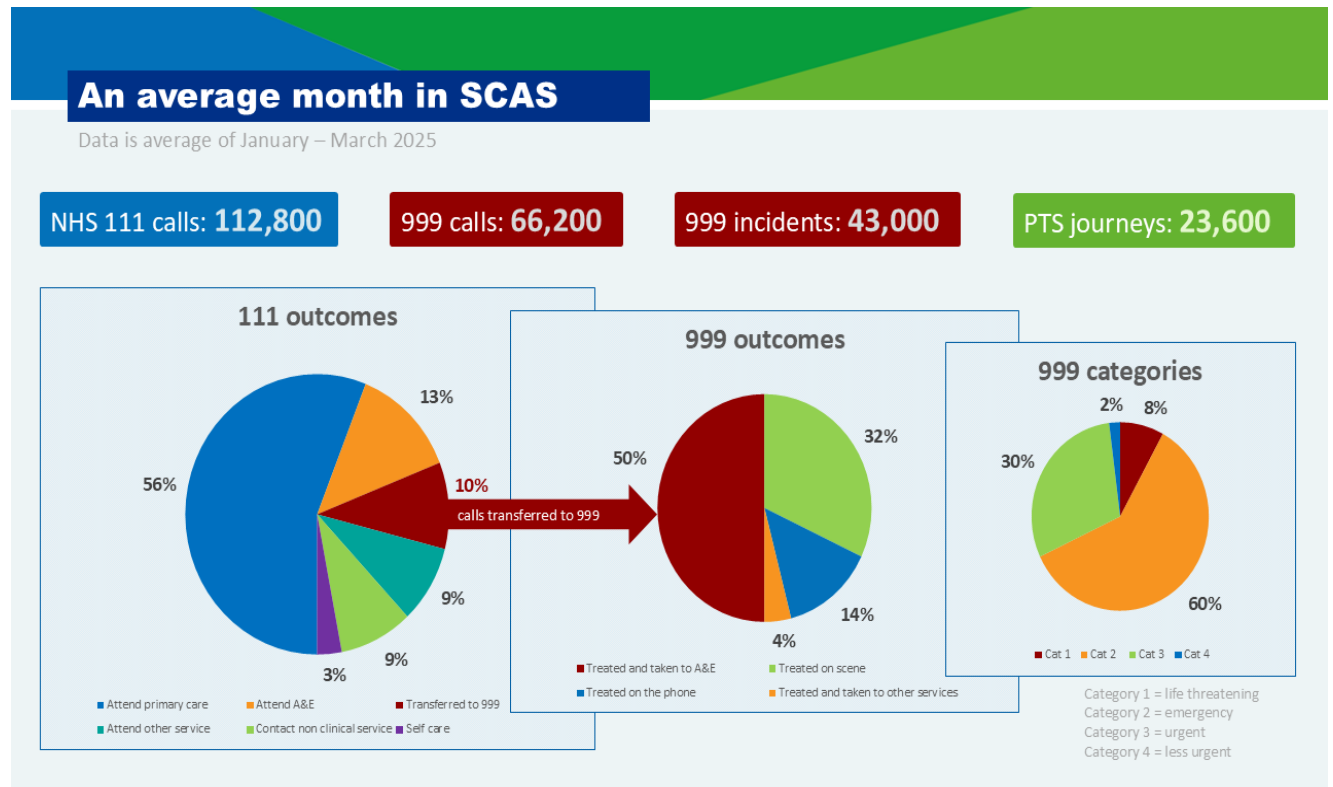
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Introduction

South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust was formed on 1 July 2006.

We provide 999 and 111 services for a population of 4.4 million across the counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire and Oxfordshire. We also run Patient Transport Services in Hampshire and Milton Keynes. We employ 4,380 staff who, together with over 845 volunteers, enable us to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Executive Summary

South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SCAS) remains committed to listening to and learning from the experiences of our patients, their families, and healthcare partners.

In 2024/25, the Trust saw a 5% reduction in complaints, concerns, and healthcare professional (HCP) feedback compared to the previous year. Despite sustained high demand across the NHS, feedback volumes remained low - representing just 0.07% of total service demand.

Only two cases were referred to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, reflecting the thoroughness and transparency of our responses and the dedication of our Patient Experience Team.

We maintained a 98% response rate within required timeframes and continued to strengthen community engagement through in-person events and surveys.

Collaboration across departments—spanning complaints, clinical incidents, safeguarding, coroners’ cases, and legal claims—ensured that the patient voice remained central to our processes.

The Patient Experience Team, led by the Head of Patient Experience, drove ongoing improvements in case management, communication, and training. This work will continue into 2025/26, reinforcing our commitment to placing patient experience at the heart of everything we do.

Patient Experience Cases received

SCAS has a commitment and statutory requirement to respond to the Complaints, Concerns and Healthcare Professional Feedback it receives, from any source, seriously and in a timely way, in line with NHS Complaints policy and Trust Patient Experience Policy.

The number of Patient Experience issues raised when compared with service activity across the Trust remains at less than a tenth of 1% of contacts. SCAS welcomes this feedback and we continue to work in partnership with our patients, their representatives, the public and healthcare professionals to learn from their experiences. Patient feedback is used to inform our improvement activities and examples are included in the learning section.

Patient Experience Contacts received 2024/2025

Complaints, Concerns and Healthcare Professional (HCP) feedback	3721
Compliments	1493
Total PE Contacts received	5422

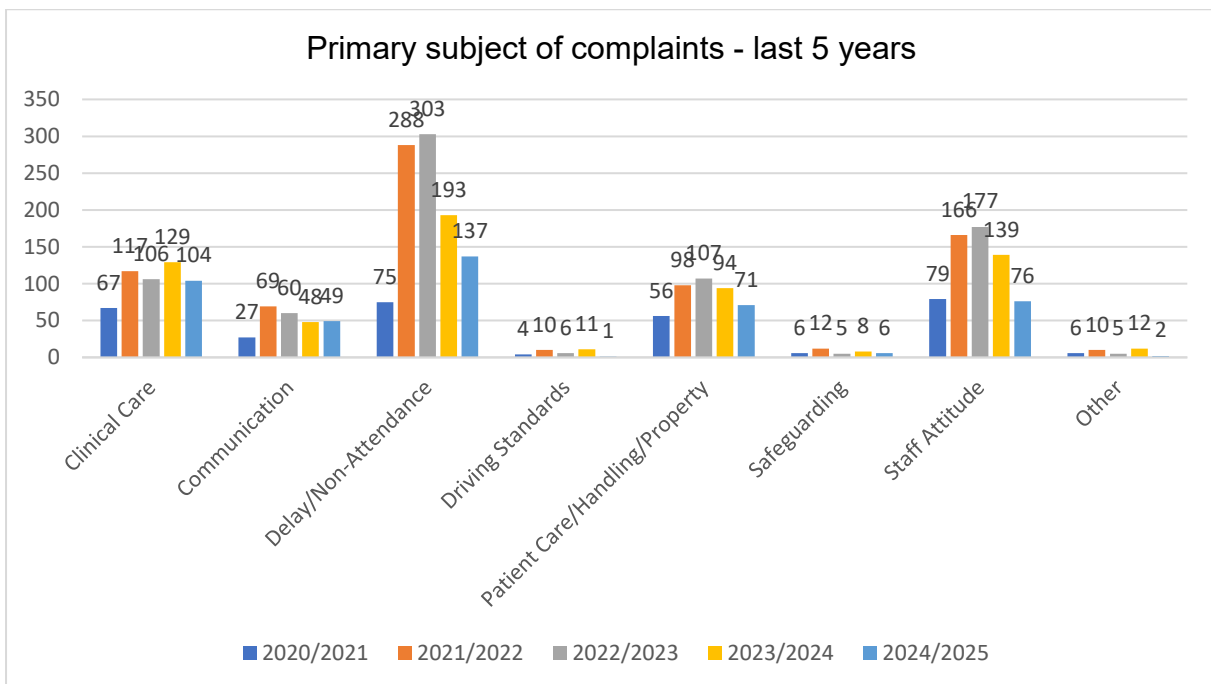
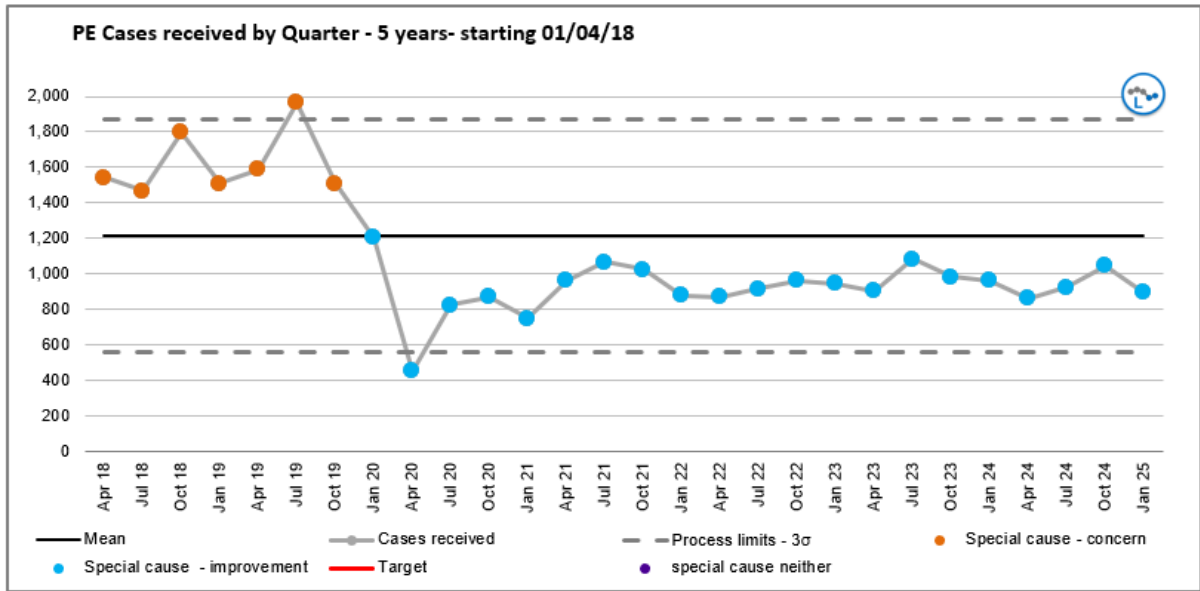
Patient Experience Contacts received 2024/2025 by Service Area

2024-2025	Complaints	Concerns	HCP	PE Total	Demand	%*
NHS111*	85	151	412	648	1,330,861	0.04%
999 Operations	137	224	503	864	556,761	0.14%
EOC*	104	130	192	426	1,035,389	0.03%
Other/Admin	4	0	0	4	n/a	n/a
NEPTS	116	421	1242	1779	588,795	0.15%
Trust Total	446	926	2349	3721	4,700,535	0.07%

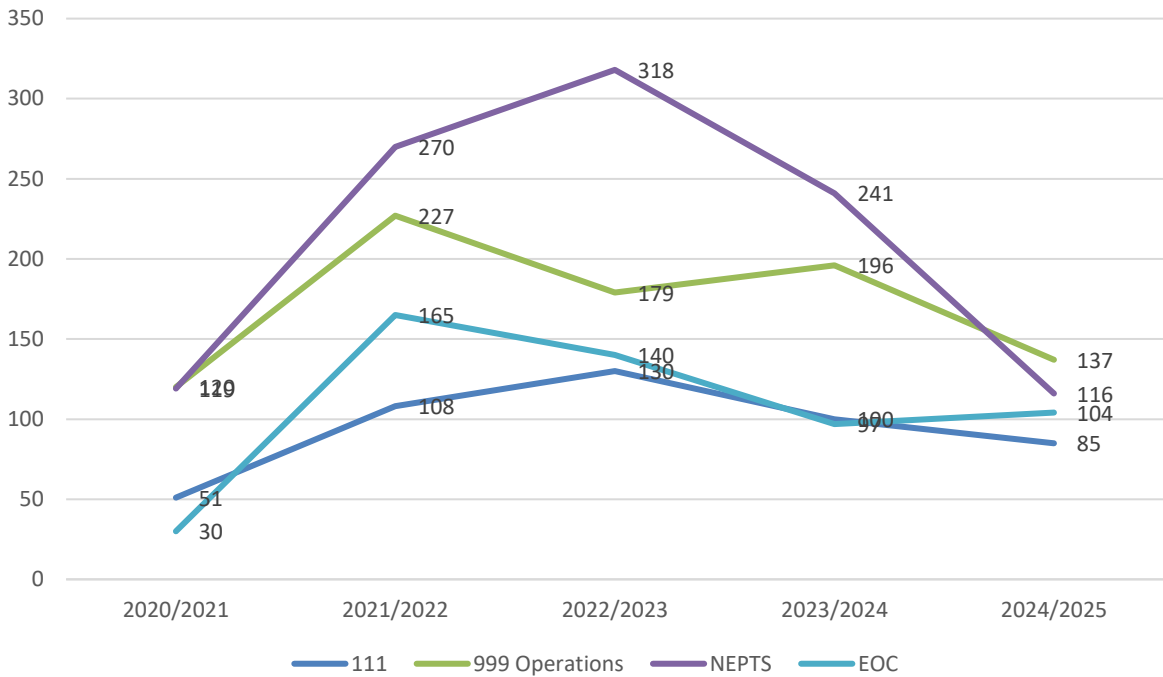
*NHS111 includes the Mental Health Triage Service

Patient Experience Cases received – Last 5 years

The chart below shows special cause improving variation. The number of cases we received dipped significantly during the pandemic and although there has been an increase, we have not reached pre-pandemic levels.



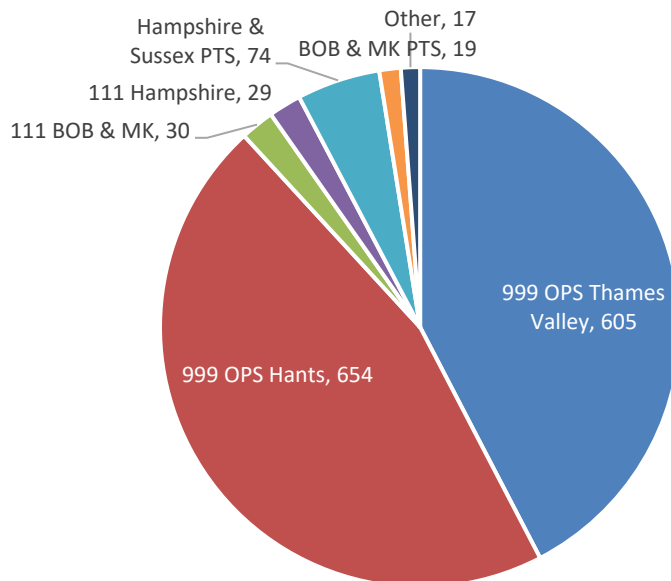
Complaints by service area - last 5 years



Compliments

In 2024/25 the Trust received 1428 compliments for our staff and volunteers. Below is a chart to show the number by division and area. Please note the 999 OPS includes CFR's/HART/ Basics.

Compliments received 2024/2025 by working area



The key themes from compliments are;

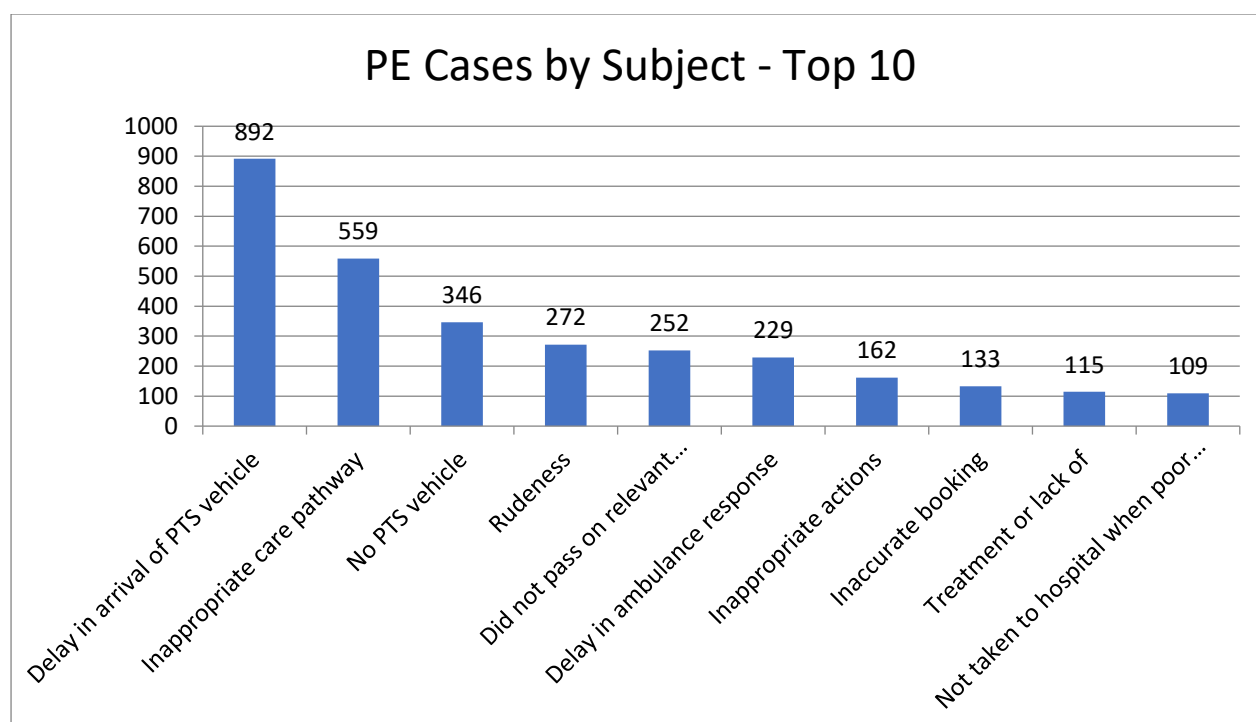
- Kind and compassionate staff who recognise that for the patient and family having an ambulance attend them is a worrying and traumatic time.
- Fast attendance when ambulance is required.
- Helpful, clear instructions and guidance from 111 & 999 call handlers
- Crew treating End of Life patients with dignity and care

Compliments sent to the Patient Experience Team are logged on Datix and disseminated to the leadership team of each working area to pass on to their staff.

Learning from Patient Experience

The Trusts mission is to deliver the right care, first time, every time. Recognising and learning from occasions where patients or members of the public may have had a poor experience is important to ensure that lessons are learned, and steps are taken to avoid a reoccurrence.

The Key themes for Patient Experience cases received in 2024/2025 were;



- Delay/ non-arrival of PTS Vehicle – This has been on the improvement work plan. It has been identified that poor or lack of communication is a large contributing factor. A working Group has been set up to look into the root causes of this and improve this for our patients and service users.
- Inappropriate disposition (111) – The operational leads and Clinical Governance team continue to work together with the largest providers of HCPF regarding inappropriate referrals. These services are gaining a better understanding of NHS Pathways and the importance of their Directory of Services being appropriate and up

to date. Where cases are found to have non-compliant audits, individual feedback to staff and support is provided.

- Staff attitude – the Trust operates a Just & Learning culture which fosters fairness, openness, and continuous improvement. When implemented effectively, it can significantly benefit staff and reduce complaints about staff attitude

Cross Departmental Collaboration

The Patient Experience Team work collaboratively to identify trends. We work with the Patient Safety Team and have developed cross-team processes for when a Patient Experience case needs to be investigated as a Patient Safety response.

We take part in the Daily Critical review alongside the Clinical Governance Leads, Patient Safety Team and Operational colleagues from all departments reviewing Incident and Patient Experience cases.

The Head of Patient Experience attends the weekly Safety Review Panel where emerging themes are discussed. Some examples of themes raised by the PE Team;

- Process issues with falls referrals causing delays in patients being assessed
- Frontline crews not completing ECG's on scene where it is clinically indicated
- End of Life process concerns from patient's and hospices
- Concerns regarding staff attitude/civility

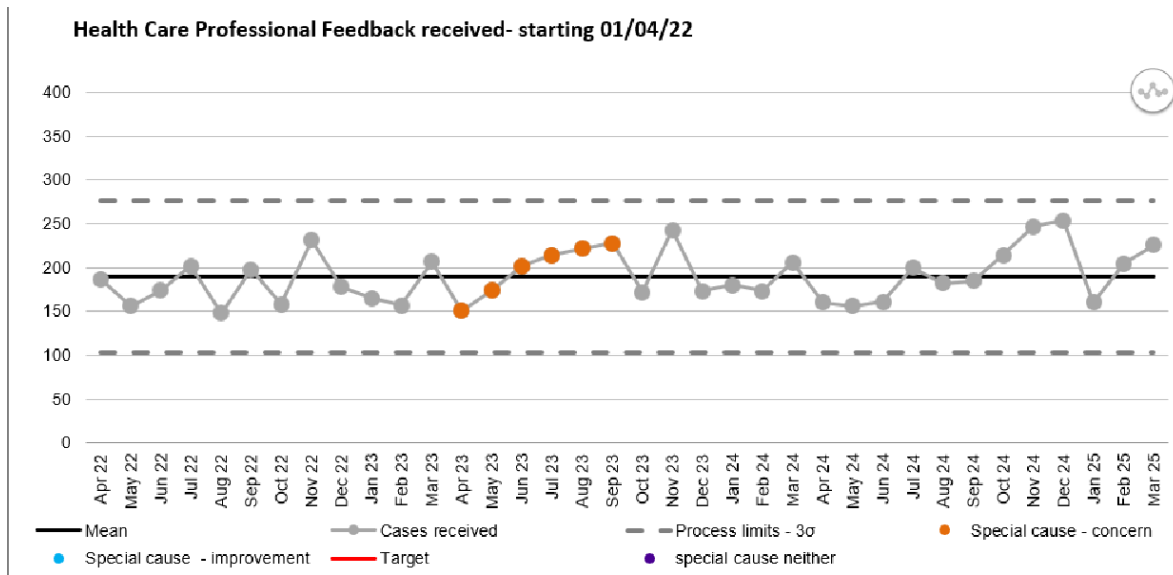
These themes have been triangulated with the Patient Safety Team where they have been investigated with Incident cases.

Health Care Professional Feedback

The highest proportion of patient experience issues received continue to be feedback raised by healthcare professionals and remains at 63% of patient experience contacts.

The trust encourages healthcare professionals to continue raising their concerns with us, in order for any relevant learning to be implemented.

The SPC chart below demonstrates the number of Health Care professional feedback received over the last year. The chart shows common cause variation, that the numbers received were within expected limits. There was an area of special cause concern from April 2023- September 2023 where the numbers were rising. This rise in numbers could have been caused by service quality changes, changes in reporting requirements or incentives or increased staff awareness or training on the importance of feedback.

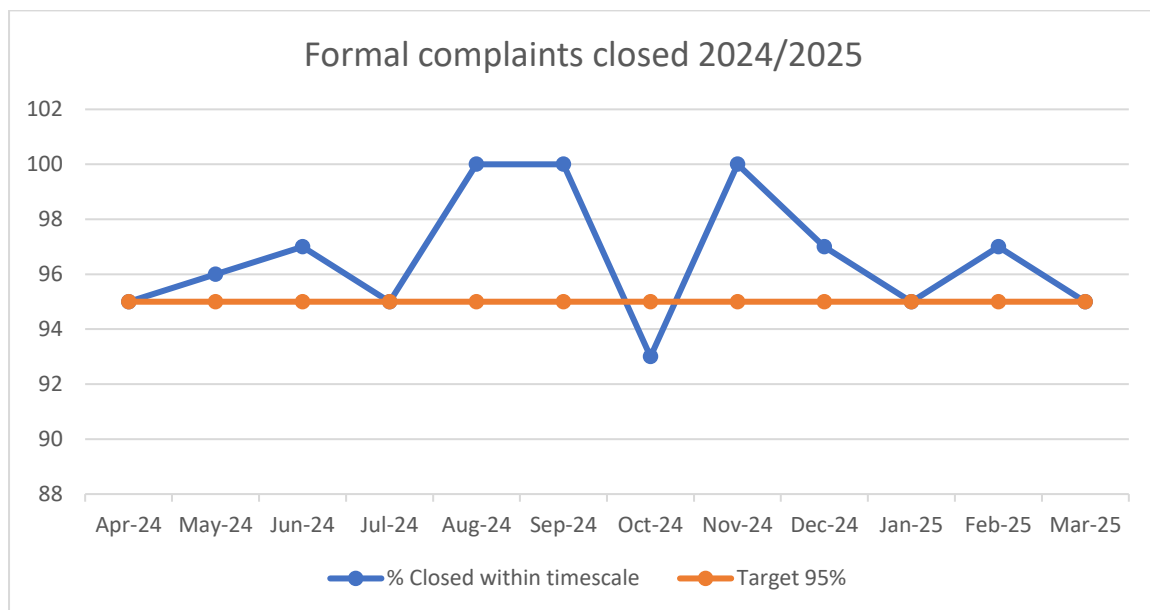


HCPF cases are reviewed at each service’s Daily Critical Review by the Patient Safety/Clinical Governance, operational colleagues and Patient Experience Teams. This ensures that any concerns relating to Patient Safety are explored fully and if required the case will be discussed at Safety Review Panel.

Acknowledgement & Response Performance

The Patient Experience Team achieved a performance rate of 99.1% across 2024/25, with 445 out of 449 complaints acknowledged within 3 days of receipt in accordance with the NHS regulatory timescale.

The following chart details complaints closed within 25 working days of receipt, or within an agreed extended timescale:



The target has been achieved in every month except one of the year as result of processes designed and embedded by HoPE, good teamwork by the Patient Experience Team, additional temporary resourcing in the Patient Experience Team, along with collaborative working between the Patient Experience Team and Collation of Facts Managers across all service areas.

Quality Accounts

The Quality Accounts priorities identified for 2024/25 for Patient Experience were:

1P.	Audit the Healthcare Professional Feedback (HCPF) process to action and learn from feedback received which requires a 'Patient Safety' response and link with LFPSE
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The objective for this audit was to ascertain the % of HCPF requests by service that require a response in order to reduce "comment only" feedback and create meaningful learning from clinical concerns. The outcome of the audit will be discussed with ICBs and system partners this will ensure SCAS respond to Health Care Professional Feedback (HCPF) requests in a timely manner and will streamline the process and make HCPF truly meaningful with learning and service improvement elements.

.As part of this piece of work, several recommendations & next steps were produced which are now being followed up as part of BAU.

2P.	Conduct a thematic analysis of compliments received to ensure learning from 'what has gone well' and the themes in order to disseminate best practice to service areas.
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During 2024/25 the Head of Patient Experience & Engagement undertook analysis and a subsequent Quality Improvement project on how way compliments are handled within the Trust and how we use the information taken from themes of complaints to inform future work.

Using these key themes from the feedback received from stakeholders the focus for the project had two main aims.

- Decrease the turnaround time from thank you being received by the Trust and the staff member receiving the thanks
- Change how the compliments are recorded and ensure all are recorded centrally on the Trust incident reporting system, Datix.

Changes Tested for 1 month following feedback

- Edited Datix form set up for compliments use.
- Compliments logged using same process as other PE feedback, so logged and sent off within 3 working days, improving turnaround time
- Compliments now sent to working areas of staff involved directly through Datix. Area administrators and managers for all services now receive the compliments, review them and prepare a more personalised letter for the staff involved.

The findings from this piece of work were presented at the Patient Safety & Engagement Group in June 2025. Following successful testing and analysis, the changes have been implemented permanently. Some further follow up work to be undertaken with the Communications Team about the possibility of including some anonymised thank you messages in Staff Matters or other appropriate comms method, a further suggestion from staff feedback.

2P.	Further develop the Patient Panel including continued recruitment and report on improvements then analyse the output from Patient Panel to inform quality improvement projects.
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Please see section on page 13 for full update regarding Patient Panel.

Training

The Patient Experience Team continued to review and improve patient experience processes and working practices throughout 2024/25. The Patient Experience Team worked collaboratively with all service areas to improve quality and timeliness, evidenced by the performance achieved this year.

The Patient Experience Team delivered virtual training sessions trust-wide across all service areas to approximately 95 investigating officers, to improve the quality and competency of complaint management, effective writing of complaint responses, and enhanced Datix use. The sessions were well received and help us to manage timeliness of responses to our patients. The Patient Experience Team also provided support to individuals on a 1:1 basis where required or requested. These activities were well received and will continue into 2025/26.

Patient Experience Investigation Guidance Notes for Investigating managers was widely promoted by the Patient Experience Team and is available to all Investigating Managers via the Trust's intranet. The guidance includes support and advice for managing a patient experience investigation along with setting out the Trust's requirement for quality and timeliness.

Patient Engagement

Several events over the year have been held, including visits to community groups and third sector organisations and coordinated larger emergency service days. Staff volunteer to attend events and are supported by SCAS community first responders, in collaboration with SCAS charity, as well as Recruitment, Patient Experience and our Learning Disability Specialist.

A key focus of these events has been tackling health inequalities and therefore the engagement events carried out by the Patient Experience Team have focused on underserved communities.

Patient Panel

We celebrated the 1st Anniversary of the first meeting of the Patient Panel in February 2025.

The panel offers patients, family members or carers of patients who have used SCAS services the opportunity to gain insight and have a say on service developments and improvements, including across our 999 emergency services (both call centre and operationally), Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS) and NHS 111.

The level of participation required to be on the panel is flexible, meaning volunteers can get involved in a way that suits them to discuss issues, as well as share views on specific areas of interest, including the design, development and delivery of Trust services.

We have specific panel groups for Learning Disabilities and Mental Health, and a subgroup is in planning for Young People.

Surveys

NHS111 patient satisfaction surveys and Complaint Satisfaction surveys have been issued by the PE Team during 2024/25.

Emergency and non-emergency survey including 111

Through the Trust's website, SCAS continues to invite service users to submit their feedback by completing our online patient feedback survey. Respondents to our online survey are encouraged to tell us about their experience of the 999 service, NHS111 and NEPTS. We ask about how the call was handled, the advice and care given by ambulance staff, and we invite respondents to comment on what would have made their experience better. SCAS offer free-text boxes for respondents to provide narrative comments which gives us greater insight into what has gone well and what can be improved.

NHS111 Surveys

The 2024/25 plan for NHS111 was to undertake patient surveys quarterly for each contract during 2024/25. A random sample of service users were selected each month. Our aim is to issue 5000 surveys per contract, this is 10,000 surveys a year. Samples were taken from service users and included the national minimum data set of questions, asking specific questions on patient satisfaction.

There is a requirement that a minimum of 250 surveys per contract are received back for the submissions to NHS England on a 6monthly basis. We have achieved this response rate by increasing the number of surveys issued.

The results received from NHS111 surveys are reported and shared via PSEG and with Commissioners and demonstrate that the vast majority of service users are very satisfied with the service and advice they received from SCAS.

Friends and Family Test (FFT)

The FFT is available to all patients to comment on their experience of care and treatment across most NHS services.

The FFT is now made up of a single mandatory default question - "Overall, how was your experience of our service?" This is followed by at least one open free-text question, so that people can tell us what they want us to know in their own words.

To report on FFT in its current format for staff and patients (in all services) and to continue to seek feedback and act on results, we have included the FFT question as the first question on all Trust surveys, the FFT response rates for NEPTS continue to be uploaded regularly to UNIFY2.

In 2024-25 we received 365 FFT responses. 256 response stated overall their experience of our service was Good and Very Good.

Complaints Satisfaction Survey

To help us monitor the effectiveness of our complaints process, South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SCAS) regularly seeks feedback from complainants who have raised formal issues for investigation. This valuable feedback is used to review and improve the Trust's complaints process and evaluate if the process is meeting the needs of service users. Additionally, it is a contract requirement for the Trust to periodically seek formal feedback from complainants regarding their experience of the Trust's complaints process.

This is a Trust wide survey. The survey information is provided on bottom of the complaint response letter. This offers the complainant two ways to complete the survey; they can either complete the survey online using the weblink provided on the complaint response letter or they contact the Patient Experience Team via telephone and a member of the team will assist the complainant by completing the survey online for the complainant by noting the feedback provided during the call.

The response rate for this survey has decreased. Between Q1 and Q4, 14 responses were received.

Of the 14 responses received, levels of satisfaction with the complaints process has decreased.

- 64% told us they felt it was easy to raise their complaint.
 - From the 36% that did not find it easy to raise a complaint, the common themes were not knowing who to contact, confusion over which organisation to complain to and for responses received towards the end of the year, the key theme was a lack of updates from the investigating officers.
- 4% told us they received contact from the Investigating Officer appointed to review their complaint (either by telephone or face to face meeting).
- 43% told us we kept them updated sufficiently regarding the process of the investigation.
- 71% told us the outcome of their complaint was explained in a way they could understand.
- 36% told us they felt that the response received addressed all of the points raised in their complaint
- 28% said they were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.
- 21% told us that overall, they were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the complaints process.
- From the 79% that were not satisfied with the complaints process, there were themes of delayed ambulance with no indication on how this will be improved, long waits to

get a response and complaint responses are biased in favour of SCAS staff and their actions.

- 57% told us they would be confident to raise a complaint against the Trust in the future.
- 29% answered that they had received an explanation of how their complaint would be used to improve services.
- 100% of respondents understood how to take their complaints further if they were not completely satisfied with the outcome.

We are continuing to work with our Collation of Facts Managers to explain and demonstrate the importance of early communication and explaining the outcome of their investigation to the complainant before they receive the response letter. It is clear from feedback that this is more satisfactory for the complainant and gives them a chance to discuss the outcome of the investigation and also gives the complainant an opportunity to clarify any outcome details they may not understand with the Investigating Officer directly prior to receiving the outcome letter.

Some potential options for trying to improve the response rate that we are considering are;

- Use bold text, colour, or a call-out box to draw attention.
- Include a brief message from a senior leader (e.g., Chief Executive or Patient Experience Lead) emphasising the importance of feedback.
- Asking Collation of Facts Managers and Senior Patient Experience Team members to mention the survey verbally when closing a complaint
- Share examples of changes made based on previous feedback
- Offer a summary of survey results on the Trust's website to show transparency.

What Matters to You Day

On What Matters To You Day, 6th June 2024, the Patient Experience Team surveyed patients across all three of the services South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SCAS) deliver. A total of 175 patient responses were collected.

The Patient Experience Team surveyed patients at 3 hospital sites, Basingstoke Hospital, Winchester Hospital and Queen Alexandra Hospital for 999 Operations. In addition to this the Non-Emergency Patient Transport (NEPTS) Team surveyed their patients on the day during the NEPTS journeys.

For the 111 aspects of 'What Matters To You Day', the Patient Experience Team contacted those who had called NHS 111 on 6th June 2024, via telephone to ask patients what matter to them.

There were three questions asked to each patient:

- What matters to you about our service?
- What matters to you about the service we provided you on 6th June?
- What matters to you about how our staff treat you today?

999 patients advised us a prompt response and time for the ambulance to arrive mattered to them. They explained that what mattered to them about the service we provided on 6th June, was that ambulance staff were very good, they asked lots of questions and wanted to

