



Scottish
Ambulance
Service
Taking Care to the Patient

proud to support
70
YEARS
of the NHS in Scotland



Feedback, Comments, Concerns and Complaints 2017/18



Contents

Introduction

Encouraging and Gathering Feedback

Encouraging and Handling Complaints

**Our Culture of Learning from Feedback,
Comments, Concerns and Complaints**

Accountability and Governance

Improvements to services

1. Introduction

During 2017/18, the Scottish Ambulance Service made significant progress towards the strategic objectives in its five-year strategy: “Taking Care to the Patient.” We are introducing new specialist and clinical roles and have recruited record numbers of new staff towards achieving our goal of 1,000 additional paramedics.

During this year we received 1,478,972 calls and responded to 764,201 accident and emergency incidents. We also completed 692,756 patient journeys, 3,721 air ambulance missions, 56,621 inter hospital transfers and 2,518 SCOTSTAR retrievals across Scotland.

We recognise that the development of our workforce is vital as we enhance partnership working with colleagues across the NHS and improve the care we are providing for patients. Paramedics’ and technicians’ roles have been re-evaluated to reflect these developing roles resulting in higher pay bands. In addition, we are developing advanced practice roles within local communities.

Our specialist paramedics are now working in rural and urban GP surgeries across Scotland, helping to treat more patients in the home and avoiding unnecessary trips to hospital.

We also continue to invest in the development of clinical advisors in our Ambulance Control Centres (ACCs) and are supporting frontline managers to make more time for helping staff, improving their working lives and the care they provide to patients.

Meanwhile, our improved staff survey for 2017/18 has introduced new ways of engaging staff at every level of the organisation about their experiences and is helping to drive forward positive change based on their feedback.

Working with other NHS Boards, Integrated Joint Boards and third sector health and social care organisations, we are ensuring patients are getting the right treatment by better identifying their particular needs. This means, for example, that falls patients and those with mental health needs get the right care, rather than simply being whisked off to the nearest A&E department. This is shifting the balance of care and ensuring that these patients can access the help they need within their local communities. Meanwhile, we have established a 24/7 specialist services desk and a major trauma triage tool which is having a positive impact in helping trauma patients who need highly specialised treatments.

Our new response system, launched in November 2016, is continuing to improve the care we are delivering for patients. Patients with immediately life threatening conditions, such as cardiac arrest, or who have been involved in serious road traffic incidents, are prioritised and receive the fastest response. In less urgent cases, call handlers may spend more time with patients to better understand their health needs and ensure we send the most appropriate resource for their condition.

The new model focuses on improving patient survival and treatment, rather than simply measuring the time it takes to respond.

Over the initial pilot period there have been improvements in getting the right type of response to the patient first time. There has also been an increase in the number of patients who have been successfully resuscitated on scene, leading to a much higher chance of surviving their cardiac arrest.

The model is currently being independently evaluated with a final report due to be published in the near future.

Our patient representatives are particularly interested in the results of this evaluation and we have made a commitment to share the findings with them when this work has been completed.

Elsewhere within the service, we've seen improvements in the patient care provided in less urgent cases, with paramedics treating more patients in the home, relieving pressure on GP surgeries and busy A&E departments.

To boost this element of our work, we are enhancing our Ambulance Control Centres and are working collaboratively with flow and discharge centres.

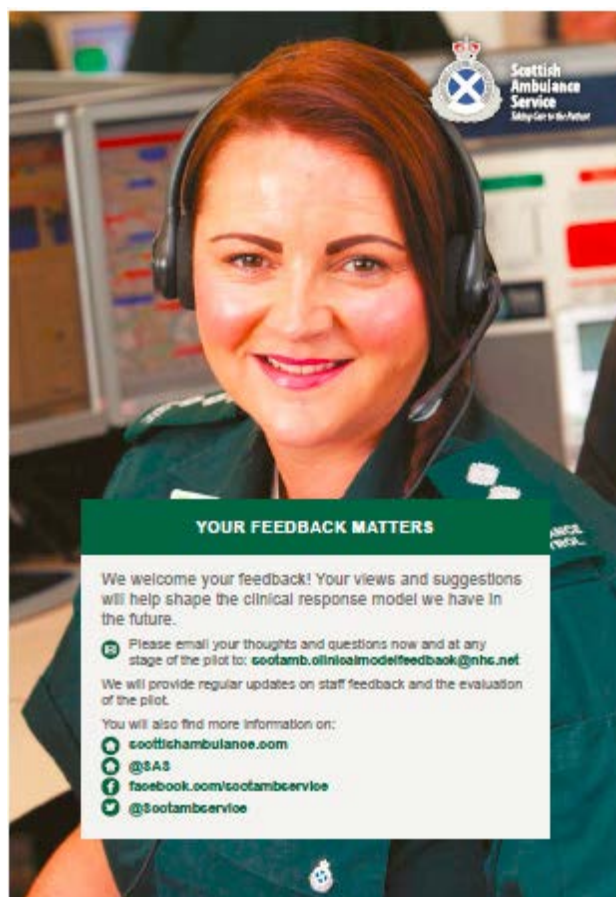
The service has introduced new electronic tablets and software into every emergency response vehicle across the country. This new technology provides an update to the Electronic Patient Report (EPR) currently in use and is supporting clinicians to treat patients more effectively by providing easy access to a growing volume of information, regardless of their location.

Our Patient Transport Service continues to undertake around 1 million journeys every year providing care for patients who need support to reach their healthcare appointments due to their medical and mobility needs. An improved Patient Needs Assessment process was implemented in 2017/18 to ensure that the patients who need our support are being identified more effectively and having their ambulance assistance booked appropriately. We are also undertaking small-scale testing of a new mobile phone application for patient transport services, which, if successful, could be rolled out across the country.



2. Encouraging and Gathering Feedback

We actively promote a range of methods by which members of the public can feedback their experiences of the Scottish Ambulance Service. Email and telephone continue to be the primary method of contacting us, but the public are increasingly utilising online channels such as Facebook, Twitter, the Scottish Ambulance Service website, Care Opinion and the Patient Advice and Support Service.

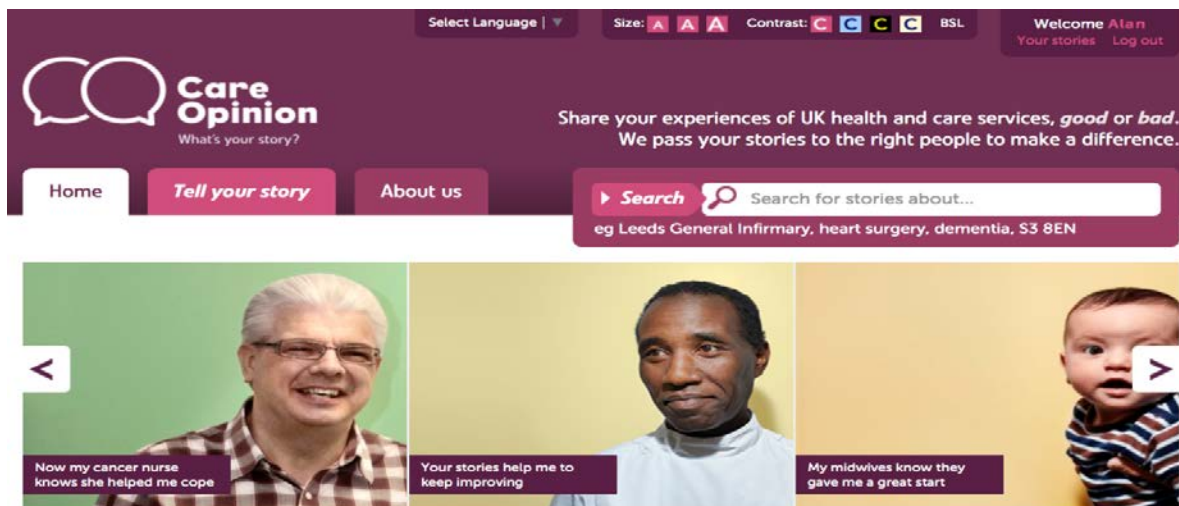


The vast majority of our feedback is positive and any comments from patients, their families, carers or members of the public are fed back directly to the staff involved and their manager.

Where negative feedback is involved, a thorough investigation is undertaken and we engage with complainants throughout the process to explain why certain actions were taken, where any lessons have been learned or where remedial action may have been taken. In certain cases, formal face to face meetings are offered and, where appropriate, a sincere apology offered.

Care Opinion

We continue to promote Care Opinion as a valuable channel for feedback from patients, families and carers who would rather express their views anonymously or indirectly to the Service. The website allows their voice to be heard on a national forum and gives us a great opportunity to engage with them about the care they received or assist them with any ongoing issues.



About Care Opinion

Care Opinion is a place where you can share your experience of health or care services, and help make them better for everyone.

At Care Opinion we make it safe and simple to share your story online and see other people's stories too. You can see how stories are leading to change.

We think that by sharing honest experiences of care, we learn to see the world differently. Working together, we can all help make care better.

What was good?



Care Opinion engagement

In 2017/18, there were 142 posts on Care Opinion about the Scottish Ambulance Service, which were viewed 105,890 times. This is a 35% increase on the 105 posts the previous year, which were viewed 62,298 times.

Manage your stories			
Latest stories, with responses and changes from Scottish Ambulance Service			
All stories	Unread	Without response	Change promised
All stories in the Scottish Ambulance Service subscription			
"The great care received during and after labour"	STORY HAS A RESPONSE	MODERATION CRITICALITY 0	ACTIVITY READ BY 128
About: Forth Valley Royal Hospital / Maternity unit and Scottish Ambulance Service / Emergency Ambulance			
"Great appointment but disappointed about patient transport"	STORY HAS A RESPONSE	MODERATION CRITICALITY 2	ACTIVITY READ BY 122
About: Crosshouse Hospital / Trauma & orthopaedics and Scottish Ambulance Service / Patient Transport Service			
"Thank you for great care"	STORY HAS A RESPONSE	MODERATION CRITICALITY 0	ACTIVITY READ BY 134
About: Scottish Ambulance Service / Emergency Ambulance, University Hospital Hairmyres / Acute Stroke Unit, University Hospital Hairmyres / Care of the Elderly and University Hospital Hairmyres / Radiology			
"My superb Care experience"	STORY HAS A RESPONSE	MODERATION CRITICALITY 0	ACTIVITY READ BY 146
About: Queen Elizabeth University Hospital Glasgow / Accident & Emergency, Queen Elizabeth University Hospital Glasgow / Xrays and Scans and Scottish Ambulance Service / Emergency Ambulance			
"Care and consideration"	STORY HAS A RESPONSE	MODERATION CRITICALITY 0	ACTIVITY READ BY 76
About: Crosshouse Hospital / Stroke Care and Scottish Ambulance Service / Emergency Ambulance			
FIRST PREV 1 2 3 4 5 6 ... 100 101 NEXT LAST			

Response from Pat O'Meara, General Manager, Ambulance Control Centres, Scottish Ambulance Service 2 months ago

Dear Dispair,

Thank you very much for calling me to discuss your son's needs. After you explained the problems he has, I spoke to my team and I was really pleased to get confirmation from them that his transport has now been arranged for his next appointment.

Please let me know if you do experience any more issues.

Regards

Pat

Dispair thinks this response is helpful
3 other people think so too

Was this response helpful? Yes | No

Update posted by Dispair (a parent/guardian) 2 months ago

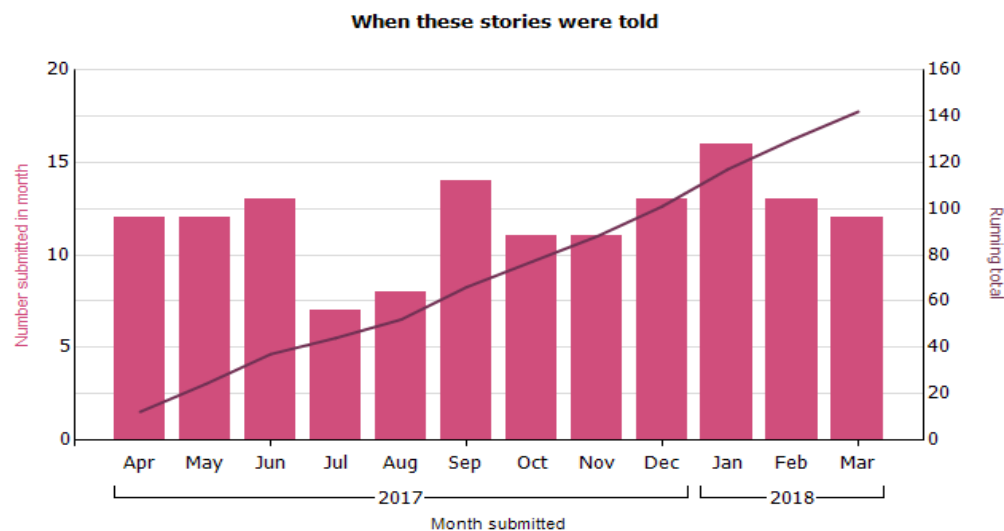
Thank you so much Pat for your response to my sons problem and due to your intervention this morning we received a call from Patient transport and they will be taking my son to his appointment after all.

We can't thank you enough.

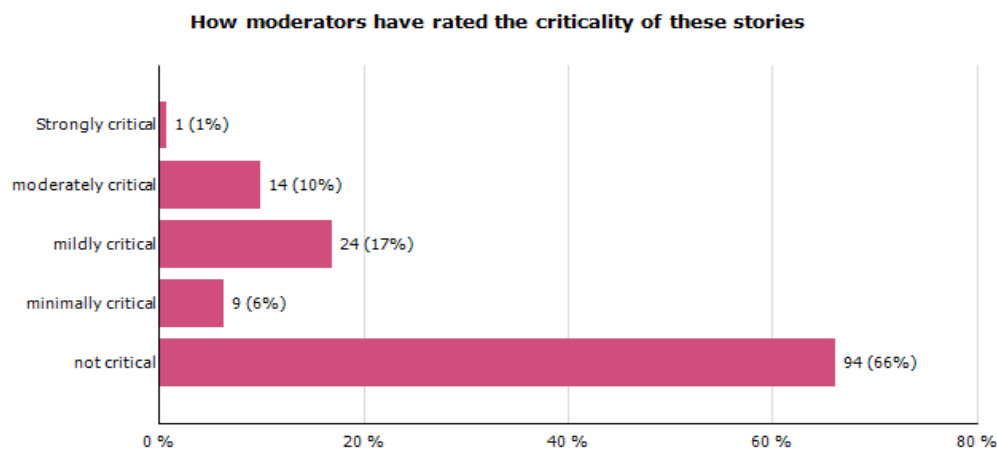
I originally was not going to put any comments on this page and now am so glad I did.

I think time has to be taken to ensure when people try to get patient transport the right questions need to be asked and not just can you get into a taxi.

There has been a relatively stable rate of posts about the Scottish Ambulance Service over the course of the year, with the busiest month being January 2018.



The vast majority of posts published were complimentary of the Scottish Ambulance Service. The one 'strongly critical' story actually praised the Scottish Ambulance Service, with criticism directed elsewhere.



In 2017/18, 70% of posts were written by either the patient or a relative.

Compliments

The Service continues to receive fantastic support from patients, carers and their families and our staff regularly receive compliments about the care they provided.

In 2017/18, the Service received over 800 compliments. This compares to 633 compliments received in the previous year.

During unprecedented conditions earlier this year when a 'red weather warning' was issued, the Scottish Ambulance Service received 91 compliments through our digital media channels from members of the public expressing their gratitude and support, with many praising our staff for 'going above and beyond'.

The most popular compliments about our staff relate to their positive attitude and their clinical skills and abilities.



Social media engagement

At every Board meeting, we focus on a patient and carer story, giving members of the public and board members the opportunity to engage and share examples of excellence in care or identify options for improvement where things may have gone wrong. The majority of stories shared with our Board in 2017/18 came directly from digital feedback received by our patient experience team via Facebook, Twitter and the Scottish Ambulance Service website.


Scottish Ambulance Service
 Published by Mark Bing [?] · 6 June at 11:00 ·

A woman who brought her partner back from the dead by giving him CPR has made a heartfelt thank you to the SAS team who helped her after he collapsed after a run.

Carrie Henehan found Mike McNally, a health care assistant at Perth Royal Infirmary, collapsed and without a heartbeat in the couple's Dundee home last month.

Carrie made an emergency call at 1901 hours, which was taken by our west control centre. ... [See more](#)




80 shares

Write a comment...

Catherine Bradley, Anna MacLean and 393 others

Most relevant

Mike McNally Thanks to everyone who played a part in saving my life that day. Certainly wouldn't be here now if it wasn't for the speed and professionalism of everyone involved. Thank you so much ❤️❤️❤️❤️

Like · Reply · Message · 4d

10 Replies


Claire McAspurn Well done to the Call Handler who passed on the life saving instructions and provided support until the crews arrived! Fantastic news & great team work by all involved. ❤️

Like · Reply · Message · 5d

1 Reply

Maureen Blair Great news guys. I am a supporter of this wonderful service and I am so delighted you were able to have there support. xX

Like · Reply · Message · 4d



Bryony Murray
 @bryony_m19


[Follow back](#)


@Scotambservice Hi 🙌 I sent feedback to @DGNHS after my grandad was told he wouldn't receive transport for cancer appts. My email was sent to SAS and the response has been amazing. Your staff (in Inverness) were so compassionate and dedicated to change. Thank you for listening!

12:36 PM · 30 May 2018

3 Retweets · 8 Likes







1

Tweet your reply


maureen mcgrath
 @maureen55853058 · Jun 7

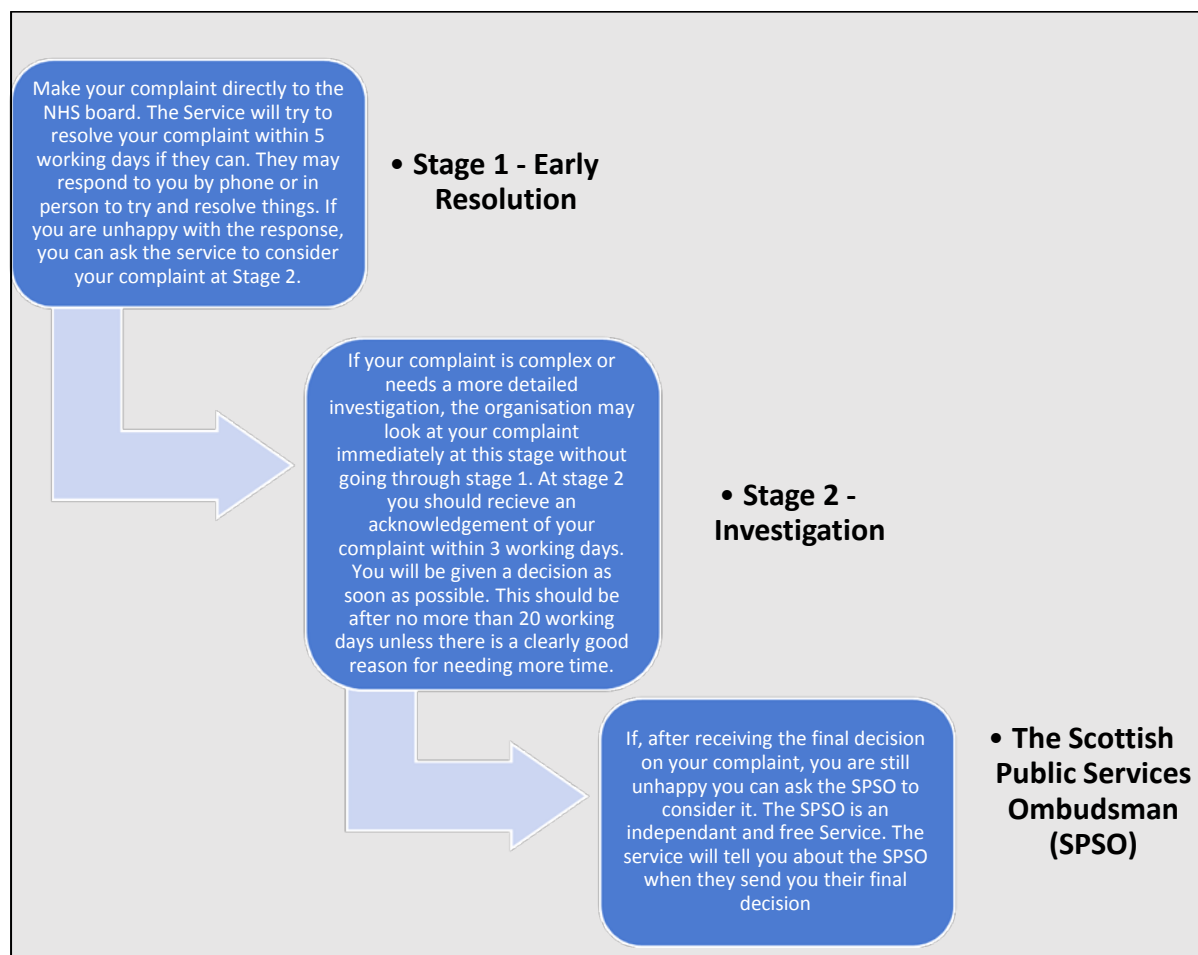

Scottish Ambulance
 @Scotambservice






3. Encouraging and Handling Complaints

On the 1st of April 2017, NHS Scotland implemented a new NHS Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP). This was put in place in an effort to improve and standardise how all NHS Boards handle complaints. There is now a two stage process in place. If at the end of this process, the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they are sign posted to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).



This new process has required a period of transition for the Service, but it has been a positive development. The new Complaints Handling Procedure has led to a more robust system which allows internal investigations to be handled in a more standardised manner. We have also seen improvements in the way in which NHS Boards are working together to respond to complaints which involve multiple departments or boards.

During 2017/18, the Scottish Ambulance Service received 1,311 complaints, with 722 being 'Stage 1' complaints and 589 being 'Stage 2' complaints. This represents a 2.7% increase on the previous year.

The number of complaints received by the Scottish Ambulance Service in 2017/18 represents around 0.07% of the 1.8 million calls we receive each year asking for our assistance.

While complaints handling is co-ordinated and quality assured by the patient experience team, the complaints investigation is handled locally by operations colleagues, who will contact the complainant and staff members about the issues raised in order to promote early resolution. Early conversations with the complainant also help put in place a proportionate review or investigation into the circumstances which led to the complaint. Local managers have access to report functions in order to understand what is working well and to identify areas for improvement. The Patient Experience team reviews feedback data at a national level to identify any emerging trends which might relate to systemic issues. The patient experience manager also sits on the Significant Adverse Event Review (SAER) Group to ensure complaints themes are cross-referenced against SAERs. He is also a member of the UK National Ambulance Service Patient Experience Group (NASPEG) which enables us to look at the patient feedback we receive in the context of other UK ambulance services and trusts.

4. Accountability and Governance

We ensured patients and carers continued to have access to a range of feedback options for providing feedback to the Service.

Complaints handling is co-ordinated by the Patient Experience team, with each complaint looked into at local level to drive improvement, while identifying any issues which require national consideration. Our patient experience manager is a practising paramedic. He is able to identify any potentially serious clinical complaints quickly. He also quality assures complaints investigations before our chief executive reviews them and responds in writing to complainants.

Complaints trends and themes are shared in a patient experience paper which is a standing item at our Clinical Governance Committee meetings and our public board meetings. This enables members of our Clinical Governance Committee and our Board to review emerging feedback and complaints themes and trends and hold individuals and groups to account for addressing areas for improvement and embedding good practice.

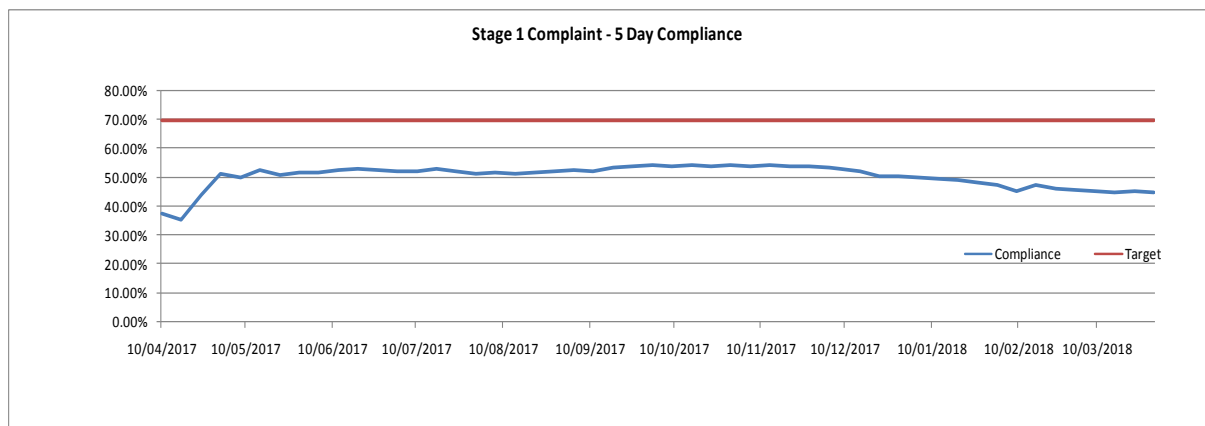
Complaints Compliance

Guidance states that all NHS Boards in Scotland should aim to respond to 70% of 'stage 1' complaints within five working days and 70% of 'stage 2' complaints within 20 working days.

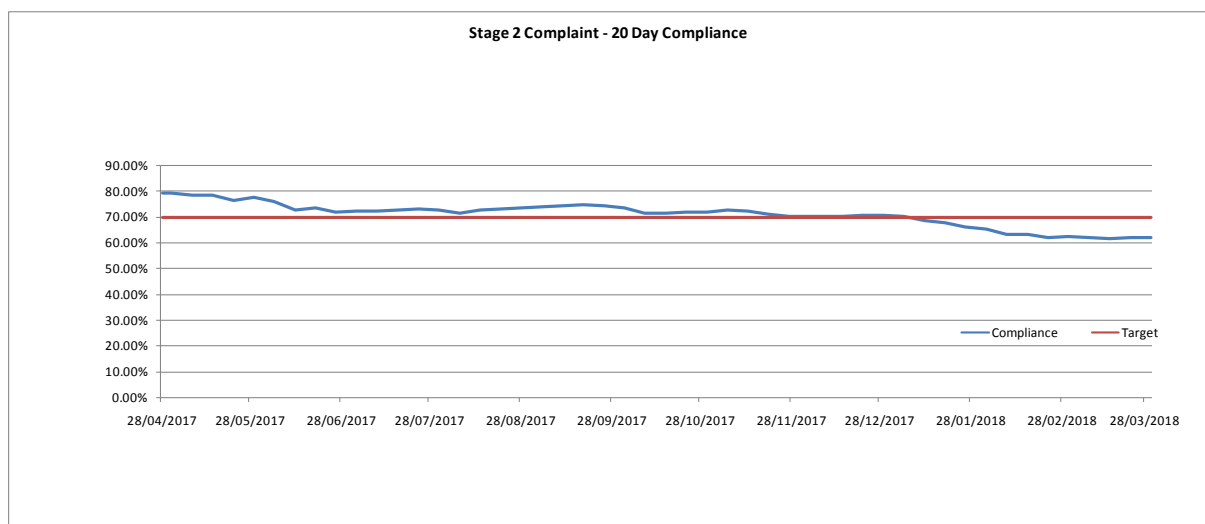
Unfortunately, the Scottish Ambulance Services did not meet the compliance rate target in 2017/18.

The first year of the new Complaints Handling Procedure was challenging for the Service, requiring staff to follow new procedures and mechanisms and it has taken our staff some time to adjust to a new approach. The Scottish Ambulance Service also faced a period of unprecedented demand on our front line services in December and January, which led to a delay in responding to complaints and our staff have subsequently been working hard to improve the situation as quickly as possible.

Stage 1 target compliance rates 2017/18



Stage 2 target compliance rates 2017/18



It was anticipated that there would be a dip in complaints compliance given the exceptional pressures faced over the winter period, which was then exacerbated by the red weather warning in March. However, urgent work is being undertaken by staff in all regions to improve response rates as a priority.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

The Scottish Ambulance Service continues to have a positive and cooperative relationship with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

In 2017/18 there were no Investigation Reports laid before Parliament. There were seven SPSO cases fully investigated in 2017/18. The SPSO upheld three complaints, with four not upheld. Where cases are upheld, the Service may already have undertaken much of the improvement work and any remedial action suggested by the SPSO in advance of the findings being formally issued.

5. Our Culture of Learning from Feedback, Comments, Concerns and Complaints

We have made a clear commitment to ensuring the voice of our patients, their carers and the public have a say in how our services are delivered. This explicit commitment featured prominently in our corporate objectives. The first goal of our 2020 Strategy: “Taking Care to the Patient” commits to ensuring our patients, our staff and the people who use our services have a voice and can contribute to service design, with people at the heart of everything we do.

Our Mission	To deliver the best ambulance services for every person, every time					
Our NHS Values	Care and Compassion, Equality, Dignity and Respect, Openness, Honesty and Responsibility, Quality and Teamwork					
Our Goals	To ensure our patients, staff, and the people who use our services have a voice and can contribute to future service design, with people at the heart of everything we do.	Expand our diagnostic capability and the use of technology to enhance local decision making to enable more care to be delivered at home in a safe and effective manner.	Continue to develop a workforce with the necessary enhanced and extended skills by 2020 to deliver the highest level of quality and improve patient outcomes.	Evidence a shift in the balance of care through access to alternative care pathways that are integrated with communities and with the wider health and social care service.	To reduce unnecessary variation in service and tackle inequalities delivering some services “Once for Scotland” where appropriate.	Develop a model that is financially sustainable and fit for purpose in 2020.
Our SAS Way	Person-centred	Safe & Effective	Quality and Outcome Focused	Collaborative	Fair and Equitable	Value driven

The goal is translated into action in many ways. For example, our project governance documents require project boards to review patient and public involvement requirements in relation to every project to be delivered. Consideration of the patient and public involvement at the earliest stages of scoping our projects enables us to build involvement into our projects from the start.

The Service continues to gather patient and carer feedback on how we deliver services at a local level. The role of the Scottish Ambulance Service is integral to the entire healthcare system in Scotland and our Patient Focused Public Involvement (PFPI) Group has allowed us to share and receive ideas on future development and improvement.

Nationally, the group oversees the work being done regionally and not only acts as another check on how we deliver our services, strategies and policies, but also helps to ensure that we can shape and deliver them to meet the needs of the people we serve across the country.

Our strategy is to create a more robust system that is co-ordinated on a national level, provide our regional groups and meetings with help, support and assistance, and allow community representatives to see the bigger picture they are feeding into.

We continue to grow our network of individual, public sector and third sector organisations to act as representatives. They then feed into these groups letting us hear exactly how we can continue to deliver a quality service and the best experience for our patients, carers and their loved ones.

In 2017/18, we created a new community engagement officer role to help us deliver our strategic goal of making our service more open, transparent and responsive to the people we serve.

Our community engagement officer is rapidly growing our relationships and ties to local communities and increasing our engagement with minority voices and the third sector, establishing new links and partnerships. This year, we have added Deaf Action, Spinal Injuries Scotland, Headway, Disability Equality Scotland, GAMH, Young Scot and BME groups to our growing list of patient representatives.



Patient Experience

Tell us about your experience ...

We have held a number of meetings in 2017/18 with patient representatives and community groups, seeking their input and feedback on a range of new developments within the Scottish Ambulance Service and to help us improve our services. Topics discussed have ranged from the Patient Transport Service, to improvements to the way we treat major trauma patients, to a scheme which is relieving pressure on A&E departments and a new app which can be used by patients.

Through this work, we are creating a space for open dialogue where community representatives can give us direct feedback and based on their insights, we can implement change.

We are also working in tandem with regional health boards to engage with their pre-existing community networks, as well creating our own new regional groups, alongside partners such as the Scottish Health Council.

Support for our culture of learning from feedback, comments, concerns and complaints is provided through patient and carer stories shared with our board at the start of board meetings.

Our award winning, quarterly staff magazine 'Response' contains an anonymised case study from a recent Significant Adverse Event Review (SAER) which is designed to share with staff where we got things wrong, and where we got things right.



The experience of our patients also features strongly in chief executive communications with our staff. She highlights good practice in the weekly staff update. Developments in patient care are a regular topic in her quarterly webcast, where staff from across the Service can discuss their recent experiences and any aspects of patient care.

Patient and carer films are also shared across different parts of the Service so that our staff can hear real examples of what went well and what could have been done better in incidents taking place across the country.

6. Improvements to Services

Complaint and concern themes and trends

The top five complaint themes in 2017/18 were attitude and behaviour, delayed response, clinical assessment/triage and eligibility.

Attitude and Behaviour

We continue to promote positive patient experiences and the importance of positive attitude and behaviour through sharing patient and carer stories with all our staff, linking with our education department to ensure best practice is highlighted.

The Patient Experience Manager is also designing a new questionnaire for staff which will look deeper into these complaints.

This will allow the Service to more effectively measure factors which may contribute to attitude and behaviour issues such as time on shift, incidents which occur near end of shift, length of service, meal break data and last known training sessions. This will give us the opportunity to pinpoint areas which could be further improved as well as identifying where we can help to support staff in their duties.

Delayed Response:

The end of 2017 saw an unprecedented increase in demand for our services, including a large rise in Immediately Life Threatening incidents, which put pressure on our responses to lower category calls. As a result, a number of delayed response complaints were received.

Scottish Ambulance Service staff are engaging directly with patients and their families to investigate concerns raised, explaining the reasons behind any delays and outlining the steps we are undertaking to improve the situation.

The Service is also undertaking a review of the busy winter period to ascertain if any lessons can be learned as well as recruiting extra staff and better aligning shift patterns to busy peaks in demand.

A demand and capacity review has also been undertaken to determine the optimal shift coverage to ensure that we have the right people, in the right place, at the right time to enhance clinical treatment for our patients.

In light of the recent changes to our response model, the reconfiguration of major hospitals in recent years and increasing demand pressures in unscheduled care, we are also undertaking a wider independent review to determine the overall capacity and workforce requirements to meet current and predicted future demand.

Triage and Clinical Assessment

The new response model is helping to get the right resource to patients, first time, within the most effective timeframe to meet their needs. Investment in additional staff and ongoing training and development of existing staff is also helping to improve the patient experience.

Eligibility for patient transport

As a result of the recommendations of an expert working group of patients, ambulance crews and members of the Ambulance Control Centre, an improved Patient Needs Assessment was implemented in 2017/18.

The improved version of this assessment process should give us a better understanding of patients needs and make sure that the most appropriate response is sent in response to a request for assistance.

We are also in the very early stages of developing a new mobile phone application for patient transport services, with small scale testing underway. Amongst other things, the app gives patients the ability to track their vehicle as well as providing regular updates on anticipated pick up times. If successful, the new application could be rolled out across the country in the near future.

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