

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

26 November 2025

South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust: Update

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Summary

This report provides an update to the Committee on two items:

- A position statement in response to the Channel 4 Dispatches documentary
- An update on the group model collaboration with South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS)

1. Recommendation

- 1.1. The Committee is asked to note and comment on the update provided.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1. Under the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 the Council may review and scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision, and operation of the health service in Medway. In carrying out health scrutiny a local authority must invite interested parties to comment and take account of any relevant information available to it, and, in particular, relevant information provided to it by a local Healthwatch. The Council has delegated responsibility for discharging this function to this Committee and to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in the Council's Constitution.

3. Dispatches Documentary

- 3.1. On Monday 13 October 2025, Channel 4 broadcasted an hour-long Dispatches documentary titled '999 Undercover: NHS in Crisis', focusing on pressures within UK ambulance services.
- 3.2. The documentary included covert filming by an undercover journalist, who joined the Trust as an Emergency Medical Advisor (999 call handler) at the

Medway Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) between May and July 2025. The journalist has since left the Trust.

- 3.3. The documentary was produced without the Trust's knowledge or consent, and it was not given an opportunity to view the footage prior to broadcast.
- 3.4. The Trust has launched a detailed internal investigation into the circumstances of the covert filming. The investigation is focused on protecting patient data, maintaining public confidence, and supporting staff wellbeing.
- 3.5. To date, no patient safety concerns have been identified in relation to the calls handled by the journalist. During their employment, they received the same comprehensive training, support, supervision and ongoing assessment as any other probationary Emergency Medical Advisor.
- 3.6. The Trust has not, to date, received any letters of complaint directly from patients specifically about the filming of this documentary.
- 3.7. Trust staff have been notably impacted by the breach of trust arising from the covert filming in their working environment. The Trust has put additional support in place for affected colleagues.
- 3.8. The Information Commissioners Office (ICO) has been informed as per the national framework for escalating potential data breaches. The Trust will continue to engage with the ICO and will respond to any further information requests.
- 3.9. Given the scope, complexity, and sensitivity of the investigation, it is expected to conclude in January 2026.
- 3.10. While the investigation is ongoing, the Trust is limited in the level of detail it can share publicly but will continue to provide high-level assurance where possible.
- 3.11. The Trust remains committed to keeping stakeholders informed and will provide a further update once the investigation concludes.

4. South Central and South East Ambulance Group Collaboration

- 4.1. In November 2024, the boards of South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECamb) and South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SCAS) endorsed the appointment of a joint strategic lead to develop a Case for Change and Joint Roadmap, exploring options for closer collaboration and making recommendations to both boards.
- 4.2. At a Joint Board meeting in October 2025, the two Trusts agreed to progress to a formal collaboration through the creation of a group model. A public announcement confirming the intention to form the South Central and South East Ambulance Group was made shortly afterwards - the first of its kind in England.

- 4.3. The new group model is a proactive move to strengthen patient care, ensure sustainable services, and build a more resilient ambulance system across the region.
- 4.4. By working together more closely, the two services will be better placed to share expertise and resources, harness innovation, and invest in improvements that directly benefit patients.
- 4.5. Through the group model, both Trusts will continue to operate independently, retaining the flexibility to meet the specific needs of their local communities, while collaborating on key priorities such as digital innovation, clinical best practice, and workforce development.
- 4.6. To strengthen alignment and ensure shared priorities are delivered effectively, the Group will introduce a shared leadership model, with a single Chief Executive and Chair supporting both Trusts. This will enable greater strategic coordination while maintaining each organisation's local accountability and identity.
- 4.7. The move is fully supported by NHS England (South East) and aligns with the NHS 10 Year Plan, helping to ensure ambulance services across the region remain safe, equitable, and financially sustainable.
- 4.8. Stakeholder engagement is a priority for both Trusts. A [microsite](#) for the South Central and South East Ambulance Group has been launched, providing information, such as the Case for Change.
- 4.9. The first internal joint engagement session was held on 3 November 2025 and was attended by more than 700 staff.
- 4.10. The transition to the South Central and South East Ambulance Group will take place in phases from late 2025 through to 2027.

5. Risk management

- 5.1. There are no risks for the Council raising directly from this report.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1. There are no financial implications for the Council arising directly from this report.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1. There are no legal implications for the Council arising directly from this report.

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Background papers

None

Appendices

None