

## SPSO decision report



**Case:** 201800817, Scottish Ambulance Service  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** failure to send ambulance / delay in sending ambulance  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C complained that the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) delayed in sending an ambulance for her husband (Mr A). Mr A's GP requested an ambulance within two hours as Mr A was experiencing vomiting and diarrhoea and was delirious. The ambulance did not arrive until almost eight hours later. SAS explained that there was an unexpected increase in the volume of calls that day, and that there was no missed opportunity to allocate an ambulance. SAS acknowledged that their delay in sending an ambulance was unreasonable.

We took independent advice from a consultant paramedic. We found that there was no missed opportunity to send an ambulance. However, we found that on one occasion the SAS call handler failed to use the correct interrogation system. We also found that SAS failed to carry out a clinical triage which would have involved Mrs C receiving a call from a clinical adviser who would have assessed Mr A's symptoms in more detail. This failing was acknowledged by SAS and was due to the high demand on the service. We upheld Mrs C's complaint and made a recommendation for learning and improvement.

### Recommendations

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- SAS should ensure that call handlers have absolute clarity on 999 call made by/on behalf of urgent patients to ensure correct interrogation system is used consistently.