

Title: Surgical Speciality Complaints

Reference Number: RDF1293-23

Date of Response: 06/03/23

Further to your Freedom of Information Act request, please find the Trust's response(s) below:

I am conducting research on risk-taking behaviours in surgical specialties. The purpose of this is to understand the level of risk-taking across several surgical specialties, how risk is perceived, and how it is managed. The results of this audit will help identify areas for improvement in the training and education of future surgeons, and will contribute to the development of best practices in the field.

As a result, I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I am seeking information about the number of complaints received by your hospital trust in the past five years for the following specialties:

Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Cardiothoracic surgery, and Vascular surgery.

Specifically, I would like to request the following information for each specialty:

- 1. The total number of complaints received for each specialty in each of the past five years?*

Answer: Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust (NDHT) and the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust (RD&E) merged on 1 April 2022 to become the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

The Trust has considered your request, however to provide you with the information requested for specialities *Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Cardiothoracic surgery* would require the manual extraction and manipulation of information from various sources as information is not recorded by the Trust as per the named categories you request.

To carry out this work would exceed the appropriate cost limit as set out in Section 12 (1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and is therefore exempt.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 Section 12 (1) and defined in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004, a public authority is not obliged to comply with a request for information if it estimates that the cost of complying would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit of £450 represents the estimated cost of one person spending two and a half days in determining whether the Trust holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting that information.

We are however able to provide information for the speciality *Vascular surgery*. Please see table below representing Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Eastern and Northern Services.

| Date | Speciality | No. of Complaints |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 01/01/2018-31/12/2018 | Vascular surgery | ≤5 |
| 01/01/2019-31/12/2019 | Vascular surgery | ≤5 |
| 01/01/2020-31/12/2020 | Vascular surgery | 6 |
| 01/01/2021-31/12/2021 | Vascular surgery | ≤5 |
| 01/01/2022-16/02/2023 | Vascular surgery | 9 |

In accordance with Section 40 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, we are unable to provide figures where the number of patients is less than or equal to five and could risk the identification of those patients and breach Caldicott principles. In these cases ≤5 is used to indicate that a figure between 1 and 5 is being suppressed.

This follows NHS Digital (formerly HSCIC) analysis guidance (2014) which states that small numbers within local authorities, wards, postcode districts, CCG's providers and Trusts may allow identification of patients and should not be published.

2. The nature of the complaint?

Answer:

| Main Subject | No. of complaints per subject |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Medical Records | ≤5 |
| Clinical treatment | ≤5 |
| Communication | ≤5 |
| Access to Treatment/Drugs | ≤5 |
| Patient Care | ≤5 |
| Waiting Time & Appointments | ≤5 |
| Consent | ≤5 |

3. The outcome of the complaint, including any actions taken by the hospital trust to address the issue?

Answer: 9 complaints were upheld or partially upheld, 3 complaints are still outstanding, the others were not upheld. Actions taken include feedback to staff and apologies for lack of communication.

4. Number of operations performed in the past five calendar years for the following specialties: neurosurgery, orthopaedic surgery, cardiothoracic surgery, and vascular surgery?

Answer: Please see the table below, note that neurosurgery and cardiothoracic surgery services were transferred to University Hospital Plymouth NHS Trust.

| Specialty | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <i>neurosurgery</i> | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil |
| <i>orthopaedic surgery</i> | 6,732 | 6,841 | 4,158 | 6,391 | 7,853 |
| <i>cardiothoracic surgery</i> | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil |
| <i>vascular surgery</i> | 1,243 | 1,113 | 813 | 918 | 905 |

5. *Number of reportable / recordable patient safety incidents in the past five calendar years for the following specialties: neurosurgery, orthopaedic surgery, cardiothoracic surgery, and vascular surgery? Breakdown by incident category (if available)?*

Answer: Please see table below, note that neurosurgery and cardiothoracic surgery services were transferred to University Hospital Plymouth NHS Trust.

| Speciality / Date | <i>01/01/2018-31/12/2018</i> | <i>01/01/2019-31/12/2019</i> | <i>01/01/2020-31/12/2020</i> | <i>01/01/2021-31/12/2021</i> | <i>01/01/2022-16/02/2023</i> |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>neurosurgery</i> | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil |
| <i>orthopaedic surgery</i> | * | * | * | * | * |
| <i>cardiothoracic surgery</i> | * | * | * | * | * |
| <i>Vascular surgery</i> | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil |

* The Trust has considered your request, however to provide you with the information requested for *orthopaedic surgery and cardiothoracic surgery* would require the manual extraction and manipulation of information from various sources as the information is not recorded by the Trust as per the named categories you request.

To carry out this work would exceed the appropriate cost limit as set out in Section 12 (1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and is therefore exempt.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 Section 12 (1) and defined in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004, a public authority is not obliged to comply with a request for information if it estimates that the cost of complying would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit of £450 represents the estimated cost of one person spending two and a half days in determining whether the Trust holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting that information.