



**Freedom of Information Request**

**Ref: UHB 19-699**

26 November 2019

By Email

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Trust's response is as follows:

**Request:**

Under the new charging policies introduced since the Immigration Act 2014, some UHB patients have received letters to say they are not eligible for free care and have to pay for their care.

Some have then subsequently received second letters acknowledging that the first letter was an error and they do not have to pay. How many patients have had erroneous letters telling them they have to pay, sent out in the last 3 years, 2017, 2018 & 2019?

**Response:**

The recording of the Overseas Visitors Team investigation activity was not placed into a searchable format until January 2018. Please see below what the process is.

Each day the Trust's Overseas Visitors Team (the team) receives automated reports which list all inpatient and outpatient activity from the previous 24 hours. The list is limited to information for those patients, whose data contained in their electronic record meets the criteria of an algorithm, suggesting that the patient may be an 'Overseas Visitor'.

From this list, the team conduct some checks to establish a patient's liability for charges. This may include, but is not limited to, ascertaining the type of treatment being received, establishing whether the patient is a victim of a specified type of violence, interrogating the Summary Care Record and making enquiries of the Home Office. In some circumstances patients are written to asking them to provide proof of their exemption from charge which is, in the first instance, the patient's responsibility to prove. In the event of no, or insufficient,

evidence being provided, we take reasonable steps to ascertain a patient's claim that an exemption applies before taking a view.

Between January 2018 and 20 November 2019, 13,556 records came to the attention of the team, which sent out 2,900 initial enquiry letters, which produced 113 non-responses. Non response, and where the team have failed to reasonably establish an individual's liability, results in a chargeable letter being generated and an invoice being generated. If at this point an individual subsequently proves entitlement the invoice is cancelled, the charge is no longer applicable and a letter is written to the patient, advising that they have been found to be exempt from charges.

The searchable format referred to in the first paragraph does not facilitate searching of this scenario. In order to conduct a manual search of the 113 non-responses would take in excess of 18 hours and would therefore be exempt from reporting under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act.

This concludes our response. We trust that you find this helpful, but please do not hesitate to contact us directly if we can be of any further assistance.

If, after that, you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to:

Director of Corporate Governance  
University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust  
Trust Headquarters  
Marlborough Street  
Bristol  
BS1 3NU

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

#### Publication

Please note that this letter and the information included/attached will be published on our website as part of the Trust's Freedom of Information Publication Log. This is because information disclosed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act is disclosed to the public, not just to the individual making the request. We will remove any personal information (such as your name, email and so on) from any information we make public to protect your personal information.

To view the Freedom of Information Act in full please click [here](#).

Yours sincerely

**FOI Team**  
**UH Bristol NHS Foundation Trust**