

Freedom of Information Request Ref: UHB 19-266

7 August 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:

It is of continuing concern to the public that we still hear and see ongoing reports of overseas visitors taking advantage of our National Health Service by presenting themselves at hospitals throughout the United Kingdom with pre-existing conditions and meeting little or no resistance by way of checking their entitlement to these services.

For example, only last week a media report highlighted, yet again, wide spread abuse of maternity hospitals in London from visitors from as far afield as Africa. The cost of looking after the 3,891 mothers and their new-borns was at least £13.3 million last year, an NHS investigation found. Hospitals recovered just £4.9million, leaving £8.4million unpaid-enough to employ an extra 350 nurses each year. Barts Hospital in east London is owed by foreign mothers a staggering £1,714,613. Joyce Robins, of Patient Concern is quoted as saying "It's ludicrous that thousands of pregnant women arrive in England to have their child for free."

The irony is the NHS is continually bemoaning its lack of finance, surely then, this is the area to focus upon given this situation has been rife for many years and successive governments have only talked about stricter controls without any tangible results.

In conclusion, may I request your assistance by publishing your figures relating to this issue and highlighting any outstanding debts incurred in recent years by foreign nationals, and your procedures relating to the success or otherwise of the Cost Recovery Programme within your organisation?

Response:

This trust supports the ambitions of the cost recovery programme and has an Overseas Visitors Team to satisfy the obligations as set out in the charging regulations. Using automated reports generated through the Patient Administration system the team engage with patients, staff and other stakeholders to establish a patients eligibility or otherwise to NHS hospital treatment. Where chargeable treatment has been provided the team work with internal

partners to recover monies owed and where applicable report debts to the Home Office via the Department of Health and Social Care. Where treatment has not yet been provided the team endeavour to recover the full estimated costs of treatment in advance of providing it but will not prevent or delay the provision of immediately necessary or urgent treatment.

It is important to note that all maternity treatment is deemed as being immediately necessary and thus cannot be withheld regardless of an individual's willingness or ability to pay.

University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust confirms the below figures about invoices raised and paid in the last three years:

Invoices raised for the last 3 years £2,630,806.87.

Invoices paid for the last 3 years £634,821.02.

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:

Trust Secretary
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