

Freedom of Information Request

Ref: 22-756

26 January 2023

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:

- We can confirm that we do hold the information you are requesting

1. For what symptoms would a transvaginal ultrasound be indicated?

For any symptoms where a pelvic scan has been requested by the referring clinician. A transvaginal scan allows closer inspection of the uterus and ovaries compared with a transabdominal scan.

2. Are there any groups of people a transvaginal ultrasound would not be carried out on? If so, why would they not be indicated?

Anybody who has not been sexually active, or anybody who would prefer not (examples would include but are not limited to, significantly elderly women, those with a history of sexual assault or negative sexual experiences, trans-men). The scan can be carried out by gently pressing on the lower abdomen, as an alternative, but the views and clinical information is more limited. Patients are able to make an informed choice.

3. Does trust policy indicate that it is allowed to carry out transvaginal ultrasounds on those who have never been sexually active before? If it is not allowed, what is the reasoning behind no sexual contact being a contraindication for these scans?

Transvaginal ultrasound scans would not be indicated for those who have never been sexually active. This is generally indicated on the referral form, where a transabdominal scan again would be requested. The ultrasonographer will also use their discretion and experience if information is disclosed which would make a transvaginal scan inappropriate.

4. If transvaginal ultrasounds are not allowed in your trust for the 'sexually inactive', what is the justification for this going against the British Medical Ultrasound Society's guidelines, which state: "The concept of virginity plays no part in the clinical decision making for a TVUS" and "if a patient has not had penetrative sex, they are still entitled to be offered, and to accept, a TVUS [transvaginal ultrasound] in the same way that cervical screening is offered to all eligible patients"?

(https://www.bmus.org/static/uploads/resources/Transvaginal_Ultrasound_Guidance_Final_With_Front_Cover_MesUP8a.pdf)

Each practitioner will use their discretion and experience in every situation.

5. What does the Trust define as 'sexual activity'?

The concept of sexual activity varies from person to person, but is generally taken to mean peno-vaginal penetrative intercourse, or use of penetrative sex toys. People experience sexual activity in a variety of ways, and we do not discriminate or judge. If a patient would not feel comfortable with a transvaginal scan they are offered scanning in an alternative way.

6. Which members of staff in your trust perform transvaginal ultrasounds?

Junior doctors of various grades, obstetrics and gynaecology consultants, ultrasonographers.

7. Have all of those staff members received diversity and inclusion training regarding their patient-facing roles? If so, please detail the nature of the course or programme and number of hours completed.

Yes, this is mandatory training provided through the Kallidus system and is an online module of approximately 30-60 minutes.

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:

Data Protection Officer
University Hospitals Bristol and Weston 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

Freedom of Information Team
University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust