

Freedom of Information Request

Ref: 24-015

1 February 2024

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

We have become aware of incidents around the country where letters and different kinds of written communications failed to be sent from trusts to GPs in the area, see three examples here:

<https://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/breaking-news/hospital-trust-fails-to-send-over-50000-patient-letters-to-gps-due-to-it-fault/>

<https://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/workload/hospital-trust-fails-to-send-24000-electronic-patient-documents-to-gps/>

<https://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/technology/lmc-not-made-aware-of-hospital-trusts-failure-to-send-over-400k-gp-letters/>

Our FOI is being sent to your trust to find out if a similar incident happened in your area in the past 10 years. By 'communication' we mean any patients letters, clinical documents and anything similar which was meant to be sent to GPs and failed to be delivered.

Please may you provide me with:

1) The number of patient safety incidents (as described by Patient Safety Incident Response Framework) and serious incidents (as described by the Serious Incident Framework) identified by your trust which have affected communications (including discharge summaries, clinic letters and anything similar) from your trust to GPs in your area in the past 10 years

Since July 2015, there have been 1324 recorded patient safety incidents.

Please note that:

- We do not have access to the incident recording system used before July 2015, so cannot provide information before then.
- These recorded patient safety incidents cover communication outside of the Trust, and not specifically to GPs.
- There is no “communication” category for recorded serious incidents, so we are unable to answer specifically for serious incidents without reading every individual recorded serious incident over the past 10 years in detail. This would significantly exceed the 18 hours limit set down by the FOI as the reasonable limit. Section 12 of the FOIA provides that we are not obliged to spend in excess of 18 hours in any sixty-day period locating, retrieving and identifying information in order to deal with a request for information and therefore we are withholding this information at this time.

2) How many communications (approximately) have been affected by each of these incidents

Please note, the Trust does not hold the data in a format that would enable us to fully respond to your request to the level of detail required and a manual trawl for this information would significantly exceed the 18 hours limit set down by the FOI as the reasonable limit. Section 12 of the FOIA provides that we are not obliged to spend in excess of 18 hours in any sixty-day period locating, retrieving and identifying information in order to deal with a request for information and therefore we are withholding this information at this time.

The Trust has not had any similar large-scale systematic issues as highlighted in your request. There have been occasions when technical issues have led to letters being delayed (in substantially lower volumes than the examples cited). Such examples would include when servers have gone down and therefore not passed on documents, or mis-configuration of letters and issues with 3rd parties (such as Synertec). In these cases, when addressing the cause, we have always ensured any letters affected are subsequently sent, and in some cases if in any doubt may well have sent duplicates.

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**