

Freedom of Information Request

Ref: 20-350

15 December 2020

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

Could you please tell me between 1st March 2020 and the date of this email (31st July 2020):

The Trust does not have a separate PALS and Complaints service for the Bristol hospitals – the Patient Support and Complaints Team deal with all complaints, concerns, requests for advice/information, i.e. all of the enquiries that separate PALS and Complaints teams would deal with but as a merged single team. There is however still a separate PALS service at Weston General Hospital (WGH).

1) How many PALS enquiries and official complaints your Trust has received from patients concerned about

a) the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and your Trust's response on their access to cancer treatment

Between 01/03/2020 and 31/07/2020, the Trust has received four complaints from cancer patients about the impact of delays on their treatment due to Covid-19 restrictions (Complaints 1-4 below).

b) and access to cancer testing - including tests to find out whether their cancer has spread, returned or occurred for the first time

NOTE: I suggest you search for these complaints by using the keywords 'cancer treatment', 'chemotherapy', 'cancer testing', 'coronavirus', 'COVID-19' and other relevant terms.

The Trust has received one complaint in respect of this criteria between 01/03/2020 and 31/07/2020 (Complaint 5 below).

2) For the five most recent PALS enquiries/official complaints received, please provide

me with

a) a summary of the complaint (e.g. a patient with stage 4 lung and breast cancer has contacted PALS to complain about their chemotherapy being indefinitely suspended)

- Complaint 1 – Patient referred GP for fast-track appointment due to suspected bladder cancer. As WGH closed, patient wished to know if outpatient appointments going ahead or if they could be treated elsewhere.
- Complaint 2 – During oncology outpatient appointment, patient disclosed to staff that she had recently returned from a trip to three different countries. As a result of this, the consultant decided to delay her treatment for two weeks. The patient wondered if this was perhaps an over-reaction.
- Complaint 3 - Complainant concerned that her brother was not treated for cancer because the hospital's focus was on Covid-19.
- Complaint 4 – Patient with a previous melanoma was concerned that her dermatology appointment had been cancelled due to the pandemic, when she is supposed to be seen every three months.
- Complaint 5 – Patient's mother very concerned that her son had been fast-tracked due to suspected cancer. Scan went ahead and patient was assured his colonoscopy would go ahead even though the hospital (WGH) was closed. However, the scan was then cancelled at short notice.

b) the exact wording of the complaint, with redactions to remove potentially identifying information

- Complaint 1 – “I am a 76yr old who has been referred by my GP for fast tracking for suspected bladder cancer. The current shut down of Weston General is clearly of huge concern and I have some questions.”
- Complaint 2 – “I am calling to find out about your Coronavirus policy because something happened when I went for my oncology appointment. I disclosed that I had travelled to (named three countries) and the consultant delayed my treatment for two weeks and I wonder if this was an over-reaction”.
- Complaint 3 – “I want a lot of answers to why my brother was ignored and neglected by you, knowing how ill he was with gastro-cancer. He was not given any treatment, only given pain relief.”
- Complaint 4 – “I was due an appointment in May but due to Covid-19 this was cancelled and I was told it would be a telephone appointment instead. I then had my next appointment in August and was please this would be an actual appointment but this was also cancelled and I was quite upset about this.”
- Complaint 5 – “[Name] was assured all the previous week that even though the hospital was closed, his procedure would still go ahead. Well it hasn't and he was not offered to have it anywhere else. When is the hospital re-opening?”

c) what action the Trust took in response

- Complaint 1 – PALS Officer at WGH contacted access team to see what the situation currently was with regards to fast-track patients but, in the meantime, patient had decided to seek private treatment and had asked her GP to refer her for this.
- Complaint 2 – Patient withdrew her complaint and said she would rather speak directly to her consultant about this decision.
- Complaint 3 – Complainant has received two formal written responses to her concerns, advising that unfortunately her brother was extremely unwell at the time he was diagnosed and the cancer had spread. Explanation given for discussions held at MDT meetings and how treatment /care pathway decisions were made.
- Complaint 4 – Specialty Manager for Dermatology called patient and discussed the issues that Covid-19 was causing with appointments and the reasons for this. Advised her that we would soon be restarting face-to-face appointments, which the patient was happy with. She said she understood the pressure the NHS was under and was happy to make a face-to-face appointment for September when she returned from holiday.
- Complaint 5 – After making complaint via MP, patient had new date confirmed for colonoscopy. His mother did not wish to make a complaint but wanted reassurances that this new appointment would go ahead. PALS Officer at WGH spoke to patient, who did not wish to make a complaint and was happy that his procedure had been rescheduled.

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 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