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Email: NELCSU.foi@nhs.net

17 December 2020

Dear Alea

Re: Freedom of Information request – Internal Review

Reference: FOI.20.NCL102

I am writing regarding your request for an internal review for the request reference detailed above under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI(A)), which was received by NHS North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Firstly, I was sorry to read that you felt you needed to make a complaint and I hope to address all your concerns. I am the senior manager for the department and independent from the original request. Below I set out the facts of the case before I detail the findings of my review.

You emailed the CCG on 2 September 2020 and requested the following information:

It is widely reported across national and specialist health media that A&Es are, or will be, trialling projects forcing those requiring emergency assessment and treatment to 'call ahead' on a telephone contact number. The intention being to only allow access to A&E via appointment. What was previously Camden CCG and Islington CCG fund both Acute Trust A&Es and Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust. Please confirm the following:

- 1. Which, if any, of the 3 acute hospital Trusts above are included in this trial or are being considered currently for inclusion.**
- 2. If included, please provide the Equality Impact Assessment for each acute Trust.**
- 3. Regarding those with emergency mental health symptoms please explain where currently vulnerable persons are 'allowed' to attend without booking ahead.**

4. **If prohibited from any of the 3 A&Es - all within the Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust catchment area - please provide the decision and policy documents and all directives regarding this. Including the Equality Impact Assessments required by law. Links will suffice.**

Questions 1 - 4

No, it is not the intention to only allow access to Accident and Emergency via appointment and no hospitals across North Central London are trialling anything forcing those requiring emergency assessment and treatment to 'call ahead' on a telephone contact number. No patients arriving at the Accident and Emergency front door will be turned away.

Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust opened a mental health emergency hub in the grounds of St Pancras Hospital as an alternative to attendance at A&E during lockdown period. Those in mental health emergency are being asked to telephone ahead to access support when before they were allowed to present to A&E as those with physical health emergency are.

5. **Please provide the documentation and formal notification from the Trust to the relevant CCGs detailing what date this was opened and with details of criteria applied.**

Please refer to the attached documents relating to the new Mental health crisis assessment service in North Central London.

Annex A – North London Partners in health and care, 8 April 2020.

Annex B – NHS England and NHS Improvement, 13 April 2020.

6. **Please provide the documentation and formal notification from the 3 acute Trusts as to when A&Es either reduced or closed their services to mental health patients without physical symptoms.**

Not applicable. Please refer to the answer provided for Questions 1 – 4.

7. **Please provide copies of all formal directives to both NHS 111 and London Ambulance Service notifying them of any formal changes to provision and required redirection of mental health patients.**

Information not held. Please note that no formal directive was shared with NHS 111 as there is no change to the pathway. There is a mental health 'warm transfer' from NHS 111 to the

Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust 24/7 Crisis Single Point of Access (CSPA) and this remains the way in which service users can access urgent mental health support.

On 12 November 2020, you requested an internal review of the CCG's decision stating:

Please pass this on to the person who conducts Freedom of Information reviews.

I am writing to request an internal review of NHS North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group's handling of my FOI request 'Pilot sites A&Es UCLH, Royal Free and Whittington NHS Foundation Trust to pre book appointments to access emergency care including mental health emergency'.

Your response is at odds with information available regarding future access to the Royal Free emergency department.

Please review the response.

A full history of my FOI request and all correspondence is available on the Internet at this address: https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/pilot_sites_aes_uclh_royal_free

On considering your request for an internal review, I have determined the scope of my investigation to be only in relation to your request, and the information identified within scope of this request.

In assessing whether the CCG holds the requested information, I have reviewed your original request, but only in so far as is relevant to the investigation of your request.

The CCG has provided me with the further reasoning that, it is not the intention to only allow access to Accident and Emergency (A&E) via appointment and no hospitals across North Central London are trialling anything forcing those requiring emergency assessment and treatment to 'call ahead' on a telephone contact number. No patients arriving at the A&E front door will be turned away.

For clarification, CCG are progressing the national NHS Think 111 First programme which encourages patients to call 111 in the first instance for NON-URGENT related issues. However, all patients with URGENT medical issues are still encouraged to go to their local A&E and nobody will be turned away. For those calling 111 with non-urgent related issues, the intention is that these patients can be redirected to more appropriate services other than A&E. This will reduce overcrowding within busy emergency department waiting areas, reducing the risk of nosocomial infection during COVID19.

If a patient calls 111 and if it is still deemed that they need to be seen in A&E following a clinical assessment, then these patients will be booked directly into a timed slot within an emergency department. This will help stagger patients and improve flow through A&E more effectively, again reducing the risk of nosocomial infection.

Having reviewed the quality and nature of the information, I am satisfied that the CCG does not hold further information within scope of your request.

Conclusion

Having regard to the points detailed above I find that the original response is correct. This is because the CCG does not hold any additional information in relation to the request. The outcome of my internal review is that I uphold the CCG's original decision.

I hope that I have addressed all of your concerns, but please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this response.

The CCG uses feedback it receives from applicants and learning identified through the internal review process to improve its services.

If you are still dissatisfied following this internal review, you have the right under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to appeal against this decision by contacting the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner provides full and detailed guidance on the Freedom of Information Act and on when and how to complain.

Please find below the link to their website page and their helpline number.



<https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/official-information/>

Helpline number: 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745

Yours sincerely,

Jamie Sheldrake

Senior Information Governance Manager