

Our ref: VF/EL/13.109

Susan Davis
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Dear Susan

Freedom of Information Request – 13.109

I write regarding your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act, and respond as follows:-

Could you please:

1. **Tell me whether policies or procedures exist to:**
 - (a) **establish whether a patient admitted to any of your hospitals does or does not wish to receive contact from a hospital chaplain?**
 - (b) **ensure that patients (or their visitors , next-of-kin, etc) do not receive unsolicited contact from chaplains**
 - (c) **safeguard patients' personal and medical data such that hospital chaplains by default do not have access to it**
 - (d) **ensure that hospital chaplains, when given access to patient data, do not share any of it with third parties**

As is the case for all Trust staff, Chaplains are subject to the following Trust policies regarding information governance:

- *Confidentiality Code of Practice Policy*
- *Information Security and Records Management Policy*
- *Information Sharing Policy*
- *Subject Access to Health Records Policy*

In addition, Healthcare Chaplains are subject to the following professional body guidelines and codes of conduct:

- *Healthcare Chaplains' Code of Conduct (2005) – endorsed by all three of the UK professional bodies for healthcare chaplains (the College of Healthcare Chaplains (CHCC); the Association of Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplains (AHPCC); and the Scottish Association of Chaplains in Healthcare(SACH)).*

Chaplains working in hospice and palliative care settings (NHS or independent) are further subject to the following:

- *Standards for Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplaincy (2006) – prepared by AHPCC and endorsed by Help the Hospices.*
- *Guidelines for Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplaincy (2006) – produced by AHPCC and endorsed by Help the Hospices.*

Electronic copies of these may be obtained from the websites of the chaplaincy professional bodies – www.healthcarechaplains.org, www.ahpcc.org.uk, www.sach.org.uk.

Referral to the Chaplaincy Team is generally via one of the following routes: patient self-referral; family request; nurse or doctor referral; MDT meeting referral; local clergy or faith representative referral. The Trust's Chaplaincy Team has not received any complaints relating to un-requested chaplaincy visits, and in the rare event of a Chaplain mistakenly visiting a patient who had not requested a visit due to miscommunication, the Chaplain would apologise and withdraw.

By virtue both of their training and the nature of their work chaplains are very experienced at handling confidential information.

2. Outline your approach for monitoring adherence to the policies and procedures above

The Trust does not specifically monitor adherence to information governance policies and procedures by the chaplaincy team: compliance with Trust policies is a requirement for all staff, and appropriate action would be taken in case of a breach. The Trust undertakes a significant amount of monitoring of the patient experience (by which patients are asked to provide their views of Trust services) and this enables patients and carers to provide comment and feedback about the chaplaincy service. There have been no reports of dissatisfaction or adverse comment regarding the service, and no instances of breaches of confidentiality of patient data by the Chaplaincy Team have been reported.

3. provide me with a summary of the results of this monitoring for the last five years, including rates of compliance with the policies and procedures, and severity of any non-compliance events

Please see our response above.

4. Provide me with details of any action taken in respect of any non-compliance identified (e.g. tightening of procedures, disciplinary action – in the latter case taking care not to disclose any personal information).

No instances of breaches of confidentiality of patient data by the Chaplaincy Team have been reported.

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which your request has been handled please contact me, in the first instance. Ultimately, of course, you have the right of appeal to the Information Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Fisher'.

Victoria Fisher
Trust Secretary & Freedom of Information Officer