

Freedom of Information Request**Ref: UHB 17-597**

Date 23 November 2017

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Thank you for your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Trusts response is as follows:

I work in an NHS trust in the Avon area. I am keen to know more about the new policies for charging patients with no recourse to public funds for care, brought in under the National Health Service (Overseas Visitors) Charging (Amendment) Regulations 2017.1. These changes are due to come into effect on October 23rd, however so far my colleagues and I have received no information from our employer about this, and only know about this at all from what we have read in the news or online. I would very much like to know more about what will happen after October 23 rd and how the new NHS charging policies will be implemented. I am requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to try and find out more about this.

Recent Department of Health guidance² recommends that all NHS trusts should have an Overseas Visitors Manager to facilitate the implementation of the charging regulations. However, p. 87 of this guidance also makes reference to the responsibilities of clinical staff in regards to cost recovery. I would like to know what specific responsibilities frontline care and clinical staff will have, in relation to implementing charges and checking patients' residency status. The DoH's guidance outlines 'baseline questions' which should be asked of all patients to screen for those who may be eligible to pay for care. Guidance states that administrative staff should ask these questions. However several independent bodies and media outlets have suggested that frontline clinical and care staff will take an active role in this too. Can you what in what, if any, circumstances frontline care staff (nurses, healthcare assistants, mental health care coordinators, allied health professionals etc) be required to ask these baseline questions? If not either of these groups, then which staff members will be responsible? What support and training will staff get in relation to their new responsibilities?

In terms of the responsibilities of frontline care and clinical staff, we can confirm that all frontline staff will need to be aware of the new regulations, and the role they play in appropriately informing patients or signposting them to sources of information. Frontline

clinical staff will not be involved in the process of checking a patients status, but they might be asked to collect information – e.g. during registration.

As a Trust, we believe it is important that frontline clinical staff are informed about the guidance and the processes that the Trust operates so that they can inform patients and signpost to further information as needed

A variety of information is collected from patients to assess their eligibility, one aspect is the residency question asked by administrative staff when patients are booked onto the hospital PAS. Information is then reviewed by the Overseas visitors team and if further information is required to make an assessment of eligibility the patient is contacted by the team. Front line staff may need to be aware of circumstances when treatment may not be provided until eligibility has been confirmed e.g. planned treatments. A programme of awareness raising and training will support the full implementation.

I would also like to know when these changes will be brought into effect. Recent guidance states that from October 23rd, all relevant bodies will need to have systems in place to support the charging of overseas visitors. Is your trust able to comply with this deadline? What steps (including training of staff) have so far been taken to allow the trust to meet its new legal duties? When can staff expect training to begin? If not on October 23rd, when does the trust plan on implementing these changes? The DOH guidance also suggests NHS bodies contact local ‘community relations’ organisations for support in advising members of different communities about these changes. Can you elaborate on which bodies the term ‘community relations’ refers to? Which ‘community relations’ groups does this trust intend to contact?

The Trust is already working on a number of areas to improve our operational processes in relation to full implementation of the guidance

Please also note the Trust already has systems in place to support the charging of overseas visitors, these are being refreshed and updated to be fully compliant with the guidance

We can confirm the Trust will meet its new legal duties through visits to divisions, information has been shared and approaches discussed. This will be increased and more widespread as the full implementation is rolled out.

We are unable to confirm when staff can expect the training to begin as the Trust is in the process of making some changes, and refreshing a delivery plan to fully implement the guidance.

The Trust has acknowledged the DOH guidance suggests for NHS bodies to contact local ‘community relations’ organisations for support in advising members of different communities about changes. We can confirm the Trust intends to work with our colleagues in the CCG and other local trusts to coordinate approaches to partners in the community who could support patients to understand the changes

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:

Trust Secretary
University Hospitals Bristol 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

To view the Freedom of Information Act in full please click [here](#).

Yours sincerely,

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