

19th August 2022

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

I am responding to your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act. The answers to your specific questions are as follows:

1. How many patients are in the backlog awaiting scans?

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT) has 275 patients in the backlog awaiting scans as at 19th August 2022.

2. How many appointments can be made each day, and per week in the Main Unit per scanner?

The Deputy MRI Manager has advised that there is no pattern for appointments because of the variety of examinations performed. Each scan carries a different scanning time so an MRI Head with contrast would be 30 minutes, a pelvis would be 45 minutes, a whole body or cardiac scan would be 1 hour. We regular perform more and more complicated scans which can take a minimum of 45 minutes or longer.

3. How many appointments can be made each day, and per week for the Mobile Unit

We do not hold the information for the Mobile MRI scanner as we do not manage this unit.

4. How fast is the backlog reducing, month by month from peak till now?

Currently the longest waiting routine patient is 64 days. There is however a backlog on MRI cardiac scans of up to 150 days which is not Covid related but due to a new service relying on a visiting Consultant from London.

5. Is the NHS getting good value from the Mobile Unit or is it no longer needed?

The Mobile Unit is provided as an initiative from NHS England to support diagnostics including MRI and CT scanning outside of the acute hospital sites. As part of this new service we will be continuing to use a Mobile Unit to support MRI scanning for Hastings and the surrounding area for the foreseeable future.

6. **How is this inactivity contributing to reducing the well documented covid caused backlogs?**

There is no backlog at ESHT following Covid as the longest routine waiting time is only 64 days.

7. **If the mobile unit is also needed to reduce the backlog, how is it possible to have long gaps between appointments?**

Waiting times for routine MRI scans currently range between 6 to 8 weeks.

8. **Why was there no activity at the main MRI centre? No one in, no one out, no other cars parking or leaving between 6pm and 6:45? Is it not used at weekends?**

Historically the MRI Centre has been operating 8am to 8pm Monday to Sunday but staffing shortages, Covid and staff sickness have temporarily reduced operating hours to 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Following successful overseas recruitment of experienced MRI Radiographers, the MRI Centre will be opening Saturdays from October. We are unable to extend the hours sooner because of new staff start dates and training needs.

9. **To assess the situation, how many scans were done by both the main and the mobile units on Saturday 9th July?**

4 patients were scanned on the mobile unit on Saturday 9th July. As advised previously, we do not manage the bookings for the Mobile MRI scanner so are unable to comment further on these appointments. The MRI centre was not open on that date.

10. **A neighbour attended Conquest this week and was told he needed an MRI scan. He was then told to go across to the main MRI unit, where he was seen and scanned on arrival and told his scan results would be available within an hour. How was he "triaged to ensure the best diagnostic test had been requested"? Surely that's the type of service those people who donated for these units would have expected?**

The information you have requested is exempt under section 41 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This is because the information would originally have been provided in confidence. Information is exempt information if –

- (a) it was obtained by the public authority from any other person (including another public authority), and,
- (b) the disclosure of the information to the public (otherwise than under this Act) by the public authority holding it would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that or any other person.

However, we can advise that some patients, dependent on their clinical presentation, assessment by a Trust clinician and the clinical pathway they are following, may receive an MRI on the day without an appointment, e.g. the orthopaedic fast track MRI imaging for potential scaphoid fractures. All patient referrals will be evaluated by a Consultant Radiologist to ensure the best diagnostic test, which follows the agreed pathways.

11. Why then are other patients (such as myself) having to wait several weeks for an MRI scan when patients can be seen immediately?

Please refer to question 10 and note that waiting times for routine MRI scans currently range between 6 to 8 weeks. Certain MRI procedures have a longer waiting time of 4 months or longer due to the specialised nature of these procedures and availability of Consultants to oversee the scans.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Should you be dissatisfied with the Trust's response to your request, you have the right to request an internal review. Please write to the Freedom of Information Department (esh-tr.foi@nhs.net), quoting the above reference, within 40 working days. The Trust is not obliged to accept an internal review after this date.

Should you still be dissatisfied with your FOI request, you have the right of complaint to the Information Commissioner at the following address:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Yours sincerely

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