

FOI REF: 25/321

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Kings Drive
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 2UD

19th May 2025

Tel: 0300 131 4500
Website: www.esht.nhs.uk

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:

I am requesting statistic data on compliance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Specifically your compliance with the Duty to Refer under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. I am requesting the following statistics/data:

- 1) **As of 1/1/2024 - 1/1/2025, how many homeless patients have attended your hospital?**

The number of individual patients that attended the trust between 01/01/2024 – 01/01/2025: 243

The number of visits by patients in which a patient could have attended the trust more than once in A&E attendance, admission or outpatient appointment between 01/01/2024 – 01/01/2025: 493.

- 2) **As of 1/1/2024 - 1/1/2025, how many times has the 'Duty to refer: referral form' been completed and sent to a local council in compliance with the Homeless Reduction Act 2017?**

51.

- 3) **Is there any staff training in place regarding compliance with the Homeless Reduction Act 2017?**

Yes, training is offered to staff regarding compliance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

- 4) **What is your hospital policy when encountering a homeless patient?**

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT) staff will establish whether a person may be homeless or threatened with homelessness when:

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- a person attends A&E
- at any point during hospital admission whereby it is identified that a person has no accommodation or has accommodation, but it would not be suitable/reasonable for them to return to e.g. due to a medical condition or domestic abuse.

Once this has been identified, ESHT staff will complete the duty to refer form and send to the relevant housing authority duty to refer inbox. The form should include the reason for admission and brief background/diagnosis, including formulation of risk.

ESHT staff will inform housing staff of known risks to service providers and the public. This information will be included in the formulation of risk.

The duty to refer information will be completed and sent through to the housing team at the earliest opportunity – this can be done either by the ward or area the patient is in, or the Transfer of Care Hub (TOCH).

In instances when the person is ready for discharge with no significant medical issues it may be appropriate for ESHT staff to advise the person to call the housing teams themselves to book an emergency appointment. The ESHT staff will follow up with a duty to refer email with information on the person's reason for admission and medical information.

In addition to following the duty to refer process, where it is identified that a person is, or may be, a rough sleeper ESHT staff will also contact the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI). ESHT staff will ensure the RSI nurse is involved in all aspects of patient management. The RSI nurse will ensure relevant RSI specialists such as Change Grow Live (CGL), Adult Social Care and Mental Health are involved as appropriate. This will include notification of admission and discharge planning.

5) Do you offer homeless patients any form of support or advice or help? Please specify exactly what your procedure is and any paperwork/leaflets/forms you routinely give to homeless patients. Please hide any personal information about specific patients if such information exists on these documents.

As soon as a patient is identified as homeless or potentially threatened with homelessness during the inpatient stay, the Transfer of Care Hub (TOCH) is informed by the ward staff.

The TOCH is the local health and social care system-level place whereby all relevant services (e.g., acute, community, primary care, social care, housing and voluntary) are linked to coordinate care and support for people who need it – during and following discharge and to prevent acute hospital admission.

The TOCH support, advice, and promote early discussions regarding patients' safe discharges by taking a proactive approach on all matters pertaining to the management of complex cases like homelessness or threatened with homelessness or others waiting for a discharge to assess option for example, those on pathways 1, 2 & 3.

The staff (discharge sister or coordinator) will speak to the patient to obtain their consent to complete a duty to refer form on E-Searcher or via the Council website (see attached) and send to the relevant local authority housing options generic email duty to refer inbox.

For example, a referral for a person normally resident in Rye will be sent to Rother District Council, a referral for a person normally resident in St Leonards will be sent to Hastings Borough Council.

The form should include following:

1. Individual's name
2. Individual's mobile contact details
3. Signed written consent & agreement to share their information with the relevant local authority housing options team
4. Agreed reason for the referral (homeless or threatened with homelessness) including formulation of risk.

Staff will include information about any mobility issues a person has. This will include details of:

- how many steps a person can manage
- whether the person uses a walking aid
- whether the person can manage with a bath or a shower
- any other information relating to mobility and ability to access and manage in accommodation (e.g. can the person push open a fire door).

The relevant housing options team will review within 1 working day, and contact the referrer to provide advice and, if appropriate to arrange an appointment to meet with the patient. Staff to document any conversation in the patient's medical notes and on Nervecentre.

In instances when the person is ready for discharge with no significant medical issues, TOCH staff will facilitate a call to the housing option to book an emergency appointment for the person or advise the person to call the housing teams themselves to book an emergency appointment.

In instances when the person has said they have accommodation, but it is in a state of disrepair, staff will ask the person to confirm whether this has been reported to the landlord, and to do so if not. If the issue has been reported to the landlord but has not been resolved, staff can support the person to report the issue to the Housing Renewal Team. Details on how to do this can be found on the website for each district and borough^[1].

In addition to following the duty to refer process, where it is identified that a patient is, or may be, a rough sleeper, TOCH staff will also contact the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) and ensure that the RSI nurse is involved in all aspects of patient management.

On the day of discharge, A copy of the medical discharge summary letter stating the reason for admission and brief background/diagnosis, is emailed to the housing options team or the housing officer if known; a copy is also given to the patient including their completed duty to refer form. If patients meet the criteria for patient

^[1] Link for Hastings: https://www.hastings.gov.uk/housing/renting/livingconditions_concern/

transport services, then transport will be provided to support attendance at the local housing office.

East Sussex District and Borough Councils' Housing options contacts (for duty to refer)

Hastings Housing Options: housingadvice@hastings.gov.uk
Out of hours: 01424 451999

Eastbourne and Lewes Housing Options:
HousingNeedsReferrals@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk
Out of hours: EBC: 01323 410000 LDC: 01273 471600

Wealden Housing Options: housingoptions@wealden.gov.uk
Out of hours: 0330 123 3517

Rother Housing Options: housing@rother.gov.uk
Out of hours is 0330 123 3517

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

Freedom of Information Department
esh-tr.foi@nhs.net