

FOI REF: 25/403

20<sup>th</sup> June 2025

Tel: 0300 131 4500  
Website: [www.esht.nhs.uk](http://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:

- 1. Please explain any policies you have which may have previously been criticized as either of gentrification, favouring the rich or harming poorer people.**

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT) have not received any complaints or concerns logged with our Patient Advice and Liaison Service in respect of the above.

- 2. I would like you to respond either explaining why the homeless count is so low at Eastbourne Hospital, I would expect it to be either 2nd or 1st highest in UK given your location, tell me about any activity which deters homeless people from visiting your hospital.**

The right of access created by the Freedom of Information Act only applies to recorded information. The opinions requested above are not recorded and we are unable to divulge unrecorded opinions on these matters.

There is 'no activity deterring people from attending'. ESHT have an open door to absolutely everyone, as do all Emergency Departments.

Further information regarding homelessness in the Eastbourne area may be obtained from Eastbourne Borough Council by submitting a Freedom of Information request via the following email address:

[accesstoinformation@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:accesstoinformation@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

**3. I also require information on the 53 times you fulfilled your 'Duty to Refer' and how this is routinely missed in most cases.**

The right of access created by the Freedom of Information Act only applies to recorded information. The opinions requested above are not recorded and we are unable to divulge unrecorded opinions on these matters.

However, at ESHT, we pride ourselves by having a robust system that promotes the early identification of this patient group so that the right support is offered to them. We also work closely with our five neighbouring counties to effectively support the discharge of this patient group. There's a reasonably good working relationship between ESHT and our housing colleagues. The head of joint commissioning, integration, health and wellbeing, and East Sussex Housing and partnership leads, both have been pivotal in the improvement of this cordial working relationship with the Housing team leads. We occasionally catchup via MS Teams to discuss and to network.

We are sometimes prewarned of people that are likely to present to our hospitals, and we often liaise with them as well in relations to a potential case or cases identified.

Transfer of Care Hub (TOCH) staff are routinely allocated daily to respective clinical areas; TOCH Staff attends the morning's daily red 2 green board rounds to support their allocated clinical areas in facilitating resolution to this patient group or other patients, who no longer meet the criteria to reside in hospital.

ESHT is currently working with our 5 local counties housing leads, on a shared hospital discharge protocol for people in housing need. The following are some of the actions we've discussed thus far:

- Work has been underway over 18 months to strengthen links and joint working across housing, care teams and the transfer of care team over the past year. Colleagues are keen to continue to build on this in the future.
- Learning was shared from a recent co-location of housing colleagues from the Hastings team within the hospital. Housing found the approach helpful in building working relationships across the teams and direct routes for enquiries have now been established with the TOCH.
- Multi-disciplinary meetings have been established to support cases with complex needs.
- 51 Duty to Refer cases had been recorded between January 2024 and January 2025.
- Priorities for the new protocol include identifying people at risk of homelessness as early as possible at the point of admission, strengthening cross-sector working and promoting consistent working practices across the local housing authority areas.

- Key elements to include in the discharge protocol include:
  - Duty to Refer pathway (with indicative timescales and an overview of any supporting information which may be required at each stage).
  - Pathway to regional rehabilitation centres.
  - Defined escalation routes and contact points.
  - Links to emergency departments.
  - Links to specialist services including co-located occupational therapists and the Rough Sleeper Prevention and Recovery Programme.
  - Pathways for people with no recourse to public funds, including links to voluntary sector organisations.

**4. You say that 'training is offered to staff regarding compliance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.' Could you please explain this training in more detail?**

**4.1 How are staff 'offered' training?**

The Transfer of Care Hub (TOCH) staff are subject experts on all matters pertaining to patients that present to the Trust, as homeless or threatened with homelessness. All our TOCH staff receive the initial training as part of their induction, and further ongoing catchup updates, in relation to any new information with regards compliance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The TOCH is responsible for ensuring a multi-disciplinary approach to effective discharge planning and for ensuring that this patient group are discharged from hospital in an appropriate, timely and safe manner.

As part of the TOCH staff training, is highlighting some of the challenges faced by this patient group: homeless people have poorer health than the rest of the population. They have difficulty accessing primary health care and often only seek treatment when problems reach an advanced stage. Once admitted they present with a complex medical and social picture. In addition, they often self-discharge for several reasons such as unrecognised substance dependency, anxiety about losing temporary accommodation, or unrecognised mental health. We work closely with our Alcohol & Mental Health Liaison Teams, STAR Drug Response, Adult Social Care & Housing colleagues, to support patients, identified with this need.

As part of the Trust's statutory obligation, TOCH staff will support all clinical areas in the completion of a duty to refer form for patients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness as stated in The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The TOCH staff will consider the housing situation of patients on admission to ensure that patients are not discharged to inappropriate places or become homeless because of their stay in hospital.

The TOCH also provides the Trust's wide discharge planning training event, divisional and ward-based training, where all aspects of discharge planning issues including the homelessness Reduction Act 2017, is communicated and discussed with staff attending the sessions.

**4.2 Is it something they may opt to take part in?**

TOCH staff cannot opt out of the training as it is part of their role.

**4.3 Is the training mandatory?**

This is mandatory for all TOCH staff as they act as an expert resource for all clinical areas.

**4.4 Can you provide us with the training resources used to educate staff?**

Please see the attached document 'Homeless Training Pack'.

**4.5 How many staff have completed this training on the Duty to Refer?**

We currently have nineteen TOCH cross-site staff that are trained, and we also have vacant positions in the team that we are currently recruiting into.

**4.6 Which staff must complete the training?**

All TOCH staff (discharge coordinators, discharge sisters & the service leads).

**4.7 How many have received the trust training on the Duty to Refer?**

All TOCH staff.

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](mailto: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](mailto:esh-tr.foi@nhs.net)