



Ref: FOI1175

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EXETER
Devon
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d-ccg.foi@nhs.net

Tel: 01392 205205

09 January 2017

Dear

Re: Request for information under Freedom of Information Act 2000

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which was received on Wednesday 21 December 2016 at 17:09

The CCG is confirming in accordance with Section - (1) (a) of the Act, it holds the information requested and (b) is supplying it unless otherwise specified.

I can confirm that NHS Northern, Eastern and Western Devon CCG hold the requested information.

I would like to know:

Does this CCG use a system, for example, a Rapid Specialist Opinion system to review patient referrals from GPs to hospital specialists?

In some specialties, there are systems of specialist review for routine referrals (i.e. not for urgent or cancer referrals). Some context is possibly important here. The question asked about the "CCG" using such systems. However, locally elective care is planned jointly between the CCG and our local hospitals. Where systems of review are in place it is a joint decision to put it in place by the CCG and the hospitals. Enabling senior specialist opinion on a referral much sooner than would be the case if a patient always had to wait for a face-to-face appointment is a strategic direction for our health system. A key reason for this is as part of our health system's response to guidance on cancer referrals. In order to move the UK towards earlier diagnosis of cancer, clinical guidelines are now in place nationally to direct more referrals to be made urgently and seen quickly. For hospitals to be able to provide that

service it is important that referrals that are **not** for a potential cancer can be reviewed very efficiently to create time and space for dealing with suspected cancers. Rapid review of routine referrals helps to provide that efficiency safely.

If yes:

how long has this system been in place for,

Systems for consultants to review referrals and decide whether to offer management advice to a GP, an appointment with a specialist, direct access to diagnostic tests or to upgrade to a more urgent appointment have long been part of the health service. Likewise formal and informal mechanisms for GPs to contact specialists for advice. Two principle things have changed in some specialties and will do in others: i) ensuring that referral review is consistently done quickly to give certainty to the patient and the referrer and ii) planning to scale these systems up to cover more specialties.

what consultation was undertaken before the decision to implement this system was made,

As mentioned, this is not a new system but we are going about it in a more systematic manner. As we have started to scale this up we have taken feedback from GP forums about how such systems can be improved.

what company is used to carry out the review of the referral?

In almost all cases, specialist review of referrals is provided by our local hospitals: Plymouth Hospitals Trust (PHT), Northern Devon Healthcare Trust (NDHT) and the Royal Devon and Exeter Foundation Trust (RD&EFT) this can be undertaken by consultants, extended scope practitioners, specialist nurses or audiologists.

Routine Urology has been an exception to this in the short term. In February 2016, we began using a company called GP Care to provide specialist urology referral review. This was explicitly short-term with a view to local hospitals taking up this provision themselves when ready to do so. This service moved from GP Care to Plymouth Hospital in August 2016 for our Western population and will move to NDHT and RD&EFT in early 2017.

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Routine Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) referrals for our Eastern and Western population are undertaken by a local GP with a Special Interest (GPwSI) in ENT, working with supervision and support from consultants at the RD&EFT.

Routine Dermatology referrals for our Eastern and Western population are undertaken by local Dermatology GPwSIs, working with supervision and support from consultants at the RD&EFT.

Routine Cardiology referrals are reviewed by Cardiology GPwSIs, working with a local healthcare organisation called Sentinel CIC who also provide some community clinics for our Western population.

Routine mental health referrals are reviewed by senior clinicians in our local mental health provider organisations Devon Partnership Trust and Livewell CIC who provide community mental health clinics, covering north / east Devon and west Devon respectively.

If no:

Not applicable.

do you have any plans in place to implement a Rapid Specialist Opinion system, or other system to review GP referrals to specialists?

what are the details of the plan?

What is your policy for consultation with the public before contacting private companies to run NHS services?

Do you obtain consent from patients before passing their medical records and personal details to private companies?

Satisfaction

I trust this matter has been dealt with to your satisfaction but if there is anything which you need further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the office on 01392 205205 or by email at d-ccg.foi@nhs.net Please remember to quote the reference number at the top of this letter in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you can write to the office and arrangements will be made for an independent review. You of course can

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write directly to the CCGs Chief Officer if you prefer using the “contact us” details displayed on the CCG website.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal, you have the right to appeal again to the Information Commissioner at:
Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 700
Fax: 01625 524 510

Legal information pertaining to the release of this information

Please note that the information being provided to you is for information only and remains subject to existing intellectual property rights; no license for the re-use of this information is given or implied through its provision to you.

Yours sincerely,

**The Freedom of Information Office
NHS Northern, Eastern & Western Devon Clinical Commissioning Group**

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