



East London

NHS Foundation Trust

Information Governance

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10 May 2024

Our reference: FOI DA5309

I am responding to your request for information received 4 April 2024. I am sorry for the delay in responding to your request. This has been treated as a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I am now enclosing a response which is attached to the end of this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact me on the contact details above if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,

Information Rights Coordinator

If you are dissatisfied with the Trust's response to your FOIA request then you should contact us and we will arrange for an internal review of this decision.

If you remain dissatisfied with the decision following our response to your complaint, you may write to the Information Commissioner for a decision under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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

Tel: 0303 123 1113
Web: www.ico.org.uk

Please note that the data supplied is not allowed to be re-used and/or published without the explicit consent of East London NHS Foundation Trust. Please contact the signatory to request permission if this is your intention



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Interim Chief Executive Officer: Lorraine Sunduza
Chair: Eileen Taylor

Request: I would be grateful if you could confirm for us under a Freedom Of Information Request

Question 1: How / why [REDACTED] was on unescorted release and managed to escape from the John Howard mental facility recently?

Answer: The Trust has reviewed question 1 of your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) 2000.

Section 40 for the FOI Act states:

(2) This exemption covers the personal data of third parties (anyone other than the requester) where complying with the request would breach any of the principles in the UK GDPR.

In order to provide the information requested, it would be necessary to access patient records as the information is not held in a searchable format. There is no legal basis to access patient records for the purposes of responding to a Freedom of Information request. The Trust is therefore unable to provide a response.

The British public would like to understand what unescorted release is and why individuals who pose a danger to the public are allowed to leave the hospital unescorted.

Question 2: Is there such a thing as escorted release and what is the criteria for that, and why is it different from unescorted release? (In the sense that on what grounds is release sometimes unescorted).

The Trust does support escorted leave, this is dependent on the clinical presentation of the service user and based on assessment of risk. Patients detained under certain sections of the Mental Health Act 1983 require permission for unescorted leave from the Ministry of Justice.

Unescorted leave involves a service user leaving the John Howard Centre on the basis of agreement with the clinical team and with formal approval by the Ministry of Justice (if they are involved). This is agreed, following careful risk assessment, as part of a service user's rehabilitation plan. Conditions of leave are agreed in advance and the process is kept under ongoing review.

I am relatively confident there is a legitimate public interest in establishing why an individual with serious mental health issues can escape from a mental facility, especially when they are granted unescorted release.

Surely, the British public deserve to understand why a dangerous individual detained under The Mental Health Act would be granted unescorted release.

Question 3: How many of those detained in your facility have escaped in the past year?

Answer: For the context of this request, the term escaped has been taken to mean service users who have absconded whilst on leave or failed to return as agreed. The search categories that have been used to extract the data were as follows:

- Absented self from escorted leave (patients detained under MHA)
- Attempted to absent self from ward (patients detained under MHA)



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- Escaped / absented self from ward (patients detained under MHA)
- Failed to return from authorised leave (patients detained under MHA)
- Unplanned absence of informal patient

The Trust is enclosing data relating to the number of individuals who have escaped in the time period requested, based on the above search criteria.

Please see appendix 1 attached.

Question 4: How many of those detained in your facility have escaped in the past five years?

Answer: For the context of this request, the term escaped has been taken to mean service users who have absconded whilst on leave or failed to return as agreed.

The search categories that have been used to extract the data were as follows:

- Absented self from escorted leave (patients detained under MHA)
- Attempted to absent self from ward (patients detained under MHA)
- Escaped / absented self from ward (patients detained under MHA)
- Failed to return from authorised leave (patients detained under MHA)
- Unplanned absence of informal patient

The Trust is enclosing data relating to the number of individuals who have escaped in the time period requested, based on the above search criteria.

Please see appendix 1 attached.

Question 5: How many of those who escaped were eventually found?

Answer: The Trust has reviewed question 5 of your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) 2000.

Section 40 for the FOI Act states:

(2) This exemption covers the personal data of third parties (anyone other than the requester) where complying with the request would breach any of the principles in the UK GDPR.

In order to provide data on the number of individuals who absconded and were subsequently found, it would be necessary to access patient records as the information is not held in a searchable format. There is no legal basis to access patient records for the purposes of responding to a Freedom of Information request. The Trust is therefore unable to provide a response.



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