

Ref. No: 1514  
Date: 03.02.2025  
Subject: Voluntary Discharges

## REQUEST

1. The number of patients who voluntarily discharged themselves from the hospital over the past three years (2021-2024).
2. Please specify if this is due to long wait times or delays in treatment.
3. If available, please provide any breakdown of this data by department or type of treatment, if applicable.
4. Any related statistics or records on patients who left the hospital against medical advice, particularly where delays or wait times were a contributing factor.

## MWL RESPONSE

1. The number of patients who voluntarily discharged themselves from the hospital over the past three years (2021-2024).

Year	Total Discharges
2021	1705
2022	1815
2023	3323
2024	4299

Due the national coding for discharge method being 'patient discharged him/herself or was discharged by a relative or advocate' as one code until April 2023, the data does include those patients who were discharged by a relative or advocate.

As this was included in 2021 to April 2023, we have used the new codes of 'patient discharged him/herself' and added those who were 'discharged by a relative or advocate' so to keep the data aligned over all 4 years of data.

2. The reason for voluntary discharge is not captured on the electronic systems.

Section 12 of the FOIA allows a public authority to refuse a request where it estimates that it would exceed the appropriate limit to comply with the request. The relevant section states:

*12. (1) - Section 1(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit.*

where the appropriate limit is equal to 18 hours of staff time as set by the *Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulation 2004*

In determining the time limit, the Trust can only take into account

- determining whether the information is held;
- locating the information, or a document containing it;
- retrieving the information, or a document containing it; and
- extracting the information from a document containing it.

In order to determine whether the information is held in respect of your request, the Trust would need to **review** 11142 medical records for the time period stated. A simple report cannot be produced as there is not a specific code relating to self discharge.

**Calculation** - Across the Trust there were approximately 11142 instances of self discharge . If it took five minutes to locate the notes and review each event, the total time for determining whether the information is held and retrieving this information would equal 928 hours<sup>1</sup>

### **Advice and Assistance**

Under section 16 of the FOIA, advice and assistance should be provided to allow the request to come under the appropriate limit by scaling or modifying the request.

### **Unable to narrow**

However, as the information is not readily available and the number of attendances so large, it would not be easy to scale down the request in this instance, for example, to one year, as this would still exceed the time limit.

Unfortunately, the Trust is unable to provide further assistance in this instance.

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<sup>1</sup> 11142 attendances \* 5 minute to review each event = 55710 minutes  
55710 minutes = 928 hours, 30 minutes

3. Please see the figures broken down by treatment function specialty.

<b>Treatment Function Specialty</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Accident & Emergency	557	696	2100	3078
Acute Internal Medicine	0	0	0	11
Anaesthetics	0	<5	<5	<5
Breast Surgery	0	0	<5	0
Burns Care	9	11	5	<5
Cardiology	61	46	39	52
Cardiothoracic Surgery	0	0	<5	0
Clinical Haematology	8	<5	7	<5
Colorectal Surgery	<5	<5	<5	<5
Diabetic Medicine	11	<5	<5	<5
Elderly Medicine Service	19	15	25	33
Endocrinology	<5	<5	<5	<5
ENT	8	6	9	10
Gastroenterology	81	84	94	80
General Medicine	505	435	444	415
General Surgery	123	130	161	156
Gynaecology	44	36	68	77
Intensive Care Medicine Service	7	6	7	13
Intermediate Care	<5	<5	<5	<5
Interventional Radiology	0	0	<5	<5
Midwifery Service	<5	0	0	<5
Obstetrics	67	74	61	47
Ophthalmology	8	26	16	9
Oral Surgery	<5	0	0	<5
Paediatric Cystic Fibrosis	<5	0	0	0
Paediatrics	18	27	38	19
Pain Management	0	<5	5	6
Plastic Surgery	31	47	43	51
Rehabilitation	<5	<5	0	0
Respiratory Medicine	48	54	55	69
Rheumatology	0	0	<5	<5
Spinal Injuries	5	<5	<5	<5
Stroke Medicine	7	10	12	15
Trauma & Orthopaedics	43	59	68	79
Urology	28	28	42	46
Vascular Surgery	<5	0	<5	<5

<5

Due to the low number of patients which is less than five for periods in the above table, the Trust is withholding the actual number under section 40 – Personal

Information of the Freedom of Information Act due to likelihood of identification of the individual(s).

If the requestor or any other member of the general public can, on the balance of probabilities, identify individuals by cross-referencing the anonymised data with other information that was available to them, then the information is personal data and exempt from disclosure under the Act.

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