

Ref: FOIA Reference 2021/22-480

Royal Stoke University Hospital  
Data, Security and Protection  
Newcastle Road  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST4 6QG

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Email [foi@uhnm.nhs.uk](mailto:foi@uhnm.nhs.uk)

Dear

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your email dated 16th December 2021 requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) regarding Covid-19.

I can neither confirm nor deny whether the information you have requested is held by the Trust in its entirety. This is because the information requested in your question is not held centrally, but may be recorded in individual health records. In order to confirm whether this information is held we would therefore have to individually access all individual health records within the Trust and extract the information where it is present. We therefore estimate that complying with your request is exempt under section 12 of the FOI Act: *cost of compliance is excessive*. The section 12 exemption applies when it is estimated a request will take in excess of 18 hours to complete. We estimate that accessing and reviewing all individual health records and then extracting relevant information would take longer than the 18 hours allowed for. In addition to the section 12 exemption the Trust is also applying section 14 (1) exemption: *oppressive burden on the authority*

As of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2014 University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust (UHNM) manages two hospital sites – Royal Stoke University Hospital, and County Hospital (Stafford). Therefore the response below is for the two sites combined from that date where appropriate.

**Q1 I wish to know how many people within your Trust's care have died of Covid alone, no other medical issues, between January 2020 and December 2021**

A1 Section 12 exemption as detailed above

1. You have asked for the number of deaths at UHNM as a result of COVID19 only i.e. no co-morbidities.
2. We are able to provide the number of deaths of patients who have had COVID19 listed as a cause of death on their death certificate. This information is available and we follow the reporting criteria mandated by NHS Digital as we are required to submit this information and it is publicly available (at the links below). We are counting COVID-19 deaths as per the national guidance. The figure, and a description of the definition we are using, are published daily and can be found via the links below:  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath>  
<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/coronaviruscovid19/latestinsights>
3. We are not able to provide the number of deaths.
4. As part of our due diligence in determining whether the Section 12 exemption was appropriate, we took one patient at random and identified multiple contributing factors as to why the patient

passed away (in the example we reviewed there were 8). It would require a clinician to review the paper medical record, (which in the majority of cases have been archived to off-site storage), and such a review may not be able to definitively determine a single cause of death. Taking this example as a base line (the length of time to identify the record and review - approx. 2 minutes) and multiplying that by the 1540 patients concerned (as at 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021) would take in excess of 45 hours, which is far in excess of the 18 hours listed in the FOI legislation as a reasonable amount of time for one person to collate the data.

\*Please note that any individuals identified do not give consent for their personal data to be processed for the purposes of direct marketing.

***UHNM NHS Trust is a public sector body and governed by EU law. FOI requestors should note that any new Trust requirements over the EU threshold will be subject to these regulations and will be advertised for open competition accordingly.***

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An anonymised copy of this request can be found on the Trust's disclosure log, please note that all requests can be found at the following link: <http://www.uhnm.nhs.uk/aboutus/Statutory-Policies-and-Procedures/Pages/Freedom-of-Information-Disclosure-Log.aspx>

This letter confirms the completion of this request. A log of this request and a copy of this letter will be held by the Trust.

If you have any queries related to the response provided please in the first instance contact my office.

Should you have a complaint about the response or the handling of your request, please also contact my office to request a review of this. If having exhausted the Trust's FOIA complaints process you are still not satisfied, you are entitled to approach the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and request an assessment of the manner in which the Trust has managed your request.

The Information Commissioner may be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF or via [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

If following review of the responses I can be of any further assistance please contact my secretary on 01782 671612.

Yours,



University Hospitals  
of North Midlands  
NHS Trust

Jean Lehnert  
Data, Security & Protection Manager

