

Executive Corridor
Darlington Memorial Hospital
Hollyhurst Road
Darlington
DL3 6HX
Switchboard Tel: 01325 38 0100
Foundation Trust Office: 01325 74 3625
Corporate Records Office: 01325 74 3700

Request for Information Reference: 06.23.69

FOI Direct line: 01325 743700
Email: cdda-tr.cddftfoi@nhs.net

Email only

25th July 2023

Dear

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Request for Information

Thank you for submitting a request for information which we received on 28th June 2023 in relation to County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust). Your request has been processed under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and I am now able to provide you with a response.

Your request was in relation to Nitrus Oxide in Healthcare settings and I am providing the following information in response to your specific questions:

- 1. Since 2018 until now, how many complaints have you had about potential excessive exposure to Nitrous Oxide via Entonox and prolonged exposure of staff to high levels of nitrous oxide? Please provide these figures broken down year-by-year eg. 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 so far.**

None

- 2. Have you ever suspended the use of Entonox or any other inhaled as an inhalation analgesic for women in labour in either hospital setting or at home births? If so, please state how many times per year its use has been suspended since the first suspension was recorded.**

Never – if there has ever been cause to temporarily disrupt the piped supply we have been supplied with a cylinder supply in advance of the disruption

3. On average, how long has the use of Entonox been suspended for?

N/A

4. Have you currently suspended or removed Entonox as an inhalation analgesic for women in Labour in either hospital setting or at home births, or are you planning to in the future?

No

5. Do you have ventilation/scavenger units to remove Entonox in your maternity unit? If yes, how old are the ventilation/scavenger systems on the maternity wards and when they last updated/repared?

One of the Anaesthetic Gas Scavenging System (AGSS) was installed in June 2021 with the second one installed around 2000. There is a current proposal for the older AGSS to be replaced. The AGSS is present at University Hospital North Durham, but installation data is not held by the Trust. It is tested annually in line with recommendations.

6. On average, how much exposure do maternity staff have to Entonox in a week and how often do you monitor the levels?

It is not possible to quantify this as not all women cared for are in active labour and using Entonox. However, individual detectors that midwives can wear as a badge throughout their shift have been ordered and the Trust is awaiting delivery.

7. Have you had any staff who have been exposed to Entonox in excess of the Workplace Exposure Limit (WEL) of 100ppm (eight-hour time weighted average) under COSHH Regulations 2002, and what were the levels of exposure?

No

8. Is there currently any legal action involving your staff in relation to this?

There are no current employer's liability claims brought by CDDFT employees under health and safety regulations; in relation to workplace Entonox inhalation or exposure.

In line with the Information Commissioner's directive on the disclosure of information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 your request will form part of our disclosure log on the Trust's website. However please be assured that we anonymise all responses prior to adding them to the disclosure log.

I hope that this response has provided you with the information you had requested. If you have any queries or wish to discuss the information supplied, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone or in writing. If however, you are dissatisfied with the way in which your request has been handled and would like an internal review, you will need to contact me in writing at the above address or via cdda-tr.cddftfoi@nhs.

If you remain dissatisfied with our response following an internal review you have the right to appeal to The Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. More information is available on their website; www.ico.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

Corporate Records and Freedom of Information Facilitator