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Request for Information Reference: 12.19.04

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Email only

30 December 2019

### **Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Request for Information**

Thank you for your request for information received on 3 December 2019 in relation to the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (Trust). We are dealing with your request under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You requested information regarding blood cultures. Specifically you requested information as follows:

***I understand the Trust is not able to comply with the 4-hour rule regarding TAT between collection and incubation of blood cultures. It would appear that centralisation precludes compliance.***

***A risk assessment must have been undertaken by the Trust when centralisation was planned and before changes were introduced.***

- 1. Please provide me with a copy of the risk assessment document registered in relation to centralisation of the Darlington pathology service?***

The Department has searched for but is no longer able to locate the specific risk assessment document. This is due to the passage of time, and changes in the department and its personnel and processes. All risk assessments are now recorded and stored using the Q pulse information and document management system. This system was still being implemented in 2014 and not all documents were stored on Q pulse at that time. For this reason we are unable to locate the document.

The last full review of the UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations for Blood Cultures (B37) was released on the 4th November 2014 and included the 4 hour guideline. CDDFT microbiology services centralised on the same week and therefore this was not available at the time of planning for this service reconfiguration.

Neither the service on two sites prior to centralisation nor the centralised service met the 4 hour target through the night. At this time there were very few (if any) microbiology services in the region who operated 24/7 and were meeting this target. The service set up was in line with service models used at most (or all) regional laboratories. CDDFT was also one of the only Trusts left running more than one microbiology laboratory (at both acute sites) in 2014.

This deviation from this SMI guidance was identified as part of our quality improvement program and audits following centralisation and was accepted by the Microbiology Specialty Group. The service was centralised at Durham for a number of different reasons - largely due to the sustainability and quality of the service. It was not in the best interest of our patients to continue the service over 2 sites within the Trust.

Current proposals to transform microbiology services throughout the region will address this issue. Long term, Microbiology will endeavour to deliver increased through the night blood culture processing with aspirations to deliver a 24/7 service model when there is sufficient staffing capacity.

***2. RCPATH Consulting is set up to advise on the quality framework in relation to pathology services particularly in relation to reconfiguration. Was there input from this body at that time or since then?***

This service was not used on this occasion.

The centralised service planning was supported by technical staff and approved at the Microbiology Speciality Group by the Microbiology Consultant team; there was clinical input into service planning.

RCPATH KPIs are used to assess / inform our quality outputs but the 4 hour guideline for blood culture incubation is not covered in these guidelines.

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. Therefore, a version of our response which will protect your anonymity will be posted on the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust website.

If you have any queries or wish to discuss the information supplied, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above telephone number or at the above address.

If you are unhappy with the way your request for information has been handled, you can request a review by writing to:



County Durham  
and Darlington  
NHS Foundation Trust

The Chief Executive  
County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust  
Darlington Memorial Hospital  
Hollyhurst Road  
Darlington  
DL3 6HX

If, you remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request or complaint, you have a right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

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

Telephone: 0303 123 1113  
Website: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk).

There is no charge for making an appeal.

Yours sincerely

**Joanna Tyrrell**  
Freedom of Information Officer