

Complaint case study for publication on Trust website August 2014:

Miss D contacted the Trust following cancellation of her elective admission on the day.

Miss D had undergone a thorough pre-assessment two weeks before her planned admission date. On the day of her admission, she arrived at 8.00am and was directed to the gynaecology lounge. She waited here for five hours. Miss D found this environment uncomfortable to wait in as she was in a hospital gown, but members of the public were walking through the area. After 1.00pm, she was taken to another area and left to wait there alone for three hours. At 4.15pm, Miss D was informed that the operation could not go ahead as there was an abnormality in her blood test results and the blood that they may need to give her during the operation was not available.

Miss D also commented that it was only on the day of her planned admission that she was informed that she would need to take six weeks leave from work to recuperate.

Our findings

The complaint was investigated by the Risk and Governance Manager for Womens' and Sexual Health Directorate, and the complaint was not upheld.

The blood sample taken at pre-assessment was frozen for cross-matching on the day of the admission. On the day, the blood sample was thawed out and tested. The results of the test meant that the blood sample could not be cross-matched. This meant it was not safe to proceed with the surgery as there was no blood available in the event that a transfusion was required. Instances like this do sometimes occur despite correct freezing and thawing processes, without obvious explanation. The sample was duly sent to a specialist laboratory for testing.

Patient admissions are dependent on other patients being discharged so it is not always possible to allocate a bed prior to the patient going to theatre. This is why the lounge area is used. However, this is a patient area and the ward manager was concerned to learn that members of the public were allowed access on this occasion. All ward staff were reminded that members of the public should not be permitted entry to the lounge.

It is normal for patients awaiting surgery to be transferred to the theatre waiting area, although it was recognised that this can be a lonely environment, due to the clinical nature.

Apologies were offered for the confusion over the recovery time following this procedure. The importance of effective communication around surgical intervention and associated recovery times was reiterated to the staff involved.