

Ref: FOI/GS/ID 7830

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19 January 2023

## **Freedom of Information Act 2000**

I am writing in response to your request for information made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in relation to mental health related time spent in A&E.

*You asked:*

- 1. Total time, in hours, children spent in A&E, each financial year, since 2010, where their chief complaint was mental health related.*
- 2. Total time, in hours, adults spent in A&E, each financial year, since 2010, where their chief complaint was mental health related.*

Trust response:

Please note the following information:

The diagnostic and complaint coding in A&E is generally focussed on which acute issue is being treated. This leads to an extreme undercounting of mental health related attendances. For example, patients who have self-harmed will be coded as lacerations if they have cut themselves, or poisoning if they have taken an overdose, and patients suffering acute mental health crises often present with complaints of other conditions, like gastric pain or accidental injuries.

The Trust switched to a new A&E system in June 2021 and any data previously released, showing around 250-350 patients per year up to 2020 and 1,100 from 2021 is reflective of this.

Internally, the Trust has developed a 'Mental Health' flag that attempts to identify all patients with mental health issues. Multiple fields and data sources are trawled for any of the following

- A&E diagnosis or presenting complaint indicative of mental health crisis, substance abuse, self-harm etc
- Specified text strings in the clinical notes
- Referral to the psych crisis team

- ICD 10 codes on admission records indicative of mental health / psychiatric conditions / cognitive or behavioural conditions, or deliberate self-harm

Additionally, once a patient is flagged on a single attendance / admission, all subsequent attendances and admissions for the next 3 months are also flagged.

This method is therefore a count of A&E patients with mental health conditions, not A&E patients whose chief complaint was mental health related. The latter has proven impossible to pull out of the accessible data. Of course, this count will include patients with no causal link between their mental health condition and their attendance.

For the purposes of this FOI, patients with dementia have been excluded from the counts.

This count gives between 10-15% of the total A&E patient load, which is in line with anecdotal operational evidence.

Children	Maidstone Hospital			Tunbridge Wells Hospital			Trust		
	Patients	Hours	Average	Patients	Hours	Average	Patients	Hours	Average
16 and under									
2016/17	143	390	2.73	367	921	2.51	510	1,311	2.57
2017/18	190	542	2.85	560	1,646	2.94	750	2,188	2.92
2018/19	177	732	4.14	494	1,767	3.58	671	2,499	3.72
2019/20	156	599	3.84	421	1,556	3.7	577	2,155	3.74
2020/21	115	433	3.76	360	1,364	3.79	475	1,797	3.78
2021/22	545	1,791	3.29	1,112	4,651	4.18	1,657	6,442	3.89
2022/23	627	1,653	2.64	1,129	3,200	2.83	1,756	4,853	2.76

Adults	Maidstone Hospital			Tunbridge Wells Hospital			Trust		
	Patients	Hours	Average	Patients	Hours	Average	Patients	Hours	Average
Over 16									
2016/17	8,545	34,924	4.09	8,569	51,750	6.04	17,114	86,674	5.06
2017/18	9,012	34,033	3.78	10,400	58,951	5.67	19,412	92,984	4.79
2018/19	9,384	33,674	3.59	10,638	52,879	4.97	20,022	86,553	4.32
2019/20	10,623	59,737	5.62	10,766	56,053	5.21	21,389	115,790	5.41
2020/21	8,492	32,504	3.83	8,345	33,867	4.06	16,837	66,371	3.94
2021/22	11,962	52,793	4.41	12,082	63,624	5.27	24,044	116,418	4.84
2022/23	9,847	43,932	4.46	10,872	60,713	5.58	20,719	104,645	5.05