

26 July 2022

Waiting times for mental health assessments in hospital EDs 2021

This is a request under the Freedom of Information Act for information on waiting times for mental health assessments in hospital emergency departments in 2021.

Please provide me with the following information:

- 1. The number of patients presenting in hospital ED, requiring a mental health assessment, who were assessed within the target waiting time of 2 hours.**

In 2021, 1178 Service users presented in Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) and Mater Infirmorum Hospital (MIH) EDs that required a mental health assessments and were seen with the target waiting time of 2 hours.

- 2. The number of patients presenting in hospital ED, requiring a mental health assessment, who were not assessed within the target waiting time of 2 hours.**

In 2021, 848 Service users presented in RVH and MIH EDs that required a mental health assessment and were not seen within the target of 2 hours

- 3. A breakdown of waiting times where the 2 hour target was breached.**

This information is not recorded. Waiting times are recorded in the following categories, less than 1 hour, between 1 and 2 hours and more than 2 hours.

- 4. The reasons identified for breaches of the 2 hour waiting time target.**

Reasons for breaches include high volume of referrals coming through over a short period of time and in the evening/night time.

Each assessment takes on average 2 hours and often requires 2 members of staff.

Staff absences through Covid and sickness have impacted on response times as the service was not operating with full quota of staff at times.

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5. The practical steps the Trust has taken in 2021 to address the reasons outlined in Q4.

Bank and Agency staff are used to cover short and long term absences to ensure the Service is provided. Vacancies are actively recruited.

6. An update on the establishment of a Regional Mental Health Liaison Service, as outlined in the Regional Mental Health Crisis Service Implementation Plan 2021-31.

Belfast Trust is unable to give an update on this and would refer to the Department of Health / SPPG for further information as this service has not been commissioned.

7. An update on the operation of the Card Before You Leave scheme, including its current status and the number of people given a follow up appointment prior to leaving the ED.

The Card Before You Leave (CBYL) scheme is still in operation within Belfast Trust with approximately 40 referrals per week.

Service users identified and assessed as low risk by Emergency Department (ED) staff are referred to CBYL.

The Service User is provided with a card outlining a next day appointment and time prior to leaving ED.

The Mental Health Liaison team contact the Service user the next morning for follow up and on-going assessment and referral.