

Freedom of Information request 457-19

Request

I would be grateful for your responses to the following questions:

1. Who made the decision to terminate counselling mental health services (as reported here: <https://www.peebleshirenews.com/news/17945081.patients-left-dark-mental-health-services-withdrawn/>)?
2. When was this decision taken and finalized?
3. What was the rationale behind this decision?
4. How (and importantly, when) patients were notified of the decision to terminate this service?
5. How many patients were a) receiving the services cut, and b) on a waiting list for the services cut?
6. What apology has been made by the health board to patients affected?
7. What alternative services are being offered to those in need, and how will the board ensure the services are convenient/accessible for patients (taking into account working patterns and locations during the week)?

Response

1. The decision to change the way in which counselling services and emotional well being support was provided in the Peeblesshire area was made jointly between the GP Practice and the Health Board.
2. This decision was taken over a number of months including a joint meeting between the GP practice and the health board in January 2019.
3. The current service was an additional service provided using resources provided through the GP practice that were historically available from the time at which the practice was a GP Fundholding practice. In light of changes to the way in which core Counselling, Psychology, Mental Health and Well Being services are now provided in the Scottish Borders (including Peeblesshire) it was agreed between both the practice and the health board that the additional service was no longer required.
4. There has been a misunderstanding between the Practice and the Health Board on the communication with patients. It had been intended all patients would be written to to advise them of the change and how they would continue to access appropriate services.
5. The service was not cut but access to these services provided in a different way. The data on the number of patients receiving this service is not held by the Health Board because referrals were previously made by the GP Practice. Therefore under Section 17 of the FOI(S)A 2002 this data is not held.
6. The patients affected have now all be written to by the GP Practice. The health board has also apologised in public for the breakdown in communication,
7. Patients in Peebles will be able to access Mental Health, Psychology and Well Being advice (including emotional wellbeing support) in the same way as any other patient in the Borders. This will be accessed, in the same way as the counsellor, by referral from the GP Practice. In addition the Well Being service

can be accessed by a self referral. The service will always look to make appointments available at times as convenient as possible for patients.

If you are not satisfied with the way your request has been handled or the decision given, you may ask NHS Borders to review its actions and the decision. If you would like to request a review please apply in writing to, Freedom of Information Review, NHS Borders, Room 2EC3, Education Centre, Borders General Hospital, Melrose, TD6 9BS or foi.enquiries@borders.scot.nhs.uk.

The request for a review should include your name and address for correspondence, the request for information to which the request relates and the issue which you wish to be reviewed. Please state the reference number **457-19** on this request. Your request should be made within 40 working days from receipt of this letter.

If following this review, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you may appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner and request an investigation of your complaint. Your request to the Scottish Information Commissioner should be in writing (or other permanent form), stating your name and an address for correspondence. You should provide the details of the request and your reasons for dissatisfaction with both the original response by NHS Borders and your reasons for dissatisfaction with the outcome of the internal review. Your application for an investigation by the Scottish Information Commissioner must be made within six months of your receipt of the response with which you are dissatisfied. The address for the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner is, Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife.