

Freedom of Information request 526-19

Request

I am requesting figures from your health board which detail how many people manage to die at home. I believe every health authority keeps figures on the percentage of patients who "in the last 6 months of life spent that time at home or in a community setting".

1. I'm requesting those figures for your health authority for 2016/2017; 2017/2018 and for 2018/2019
2. Can you also detail what is counted as 'a community setting' e.g. a care home, a hospice etc?
3. How many carers and nurses do you employ, or indirectly employ, to provide weekend and overnight cover for those who wish to die at home with GP palliative care?
4. Is there a shortage of such cover in your area?
5. What changes would the board like to see brought in to allow more people to fulfil their wish to die at home?

Response

1. This data would be available from the National Records of Scotland as they record the location of death and is not available from NHS Borders sources. Therefore under Section 25 of the FOI(S)A 2002 this data is accessible elsewhere.
2. This data would be available from ISD, therefore under Section 25 of the FOI(S)A 2002 this data is accessible at the following link:
<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Health-and-Social-Community-Care/End-of-Life-Care>
3. The Board does not directly or indirectly employ weekend and overnight cover specifically for patients who wish to die at home with GP palliative care. There are, however, teams of health care professionals and clinicians who provide care to the general patient co-hort who may include palliative care patients and those approaching end of life. These teams include District Nurses, Community Nurses, Hospital to Home team which includes community nurses and health care support workers and the Borders Emergency Care team (BECS) provide out of hours response.
4. According to the Strategic Framework for Action on Palliative and End of Life Care - published by the Scottish Government in 2015, there is a projection that the number of people dying each year will begin to rise from 2015. By 2037 the number of people dying each year will have gone up by 12%. The Palliative Care team are working on delivering the Palliative Care focus of NHS Borders Clinical Strategy which aims to address the needs of a growing population. However the provision of social care is impacted on by an ageing population including workforce.
5. NHS Borders is committed to delivering high quality care within available means for every person. A key driver for improvement is to shift the balance of care from being centred on the acute setting, to community focussed care.

NHS Borders published their clinical strategy for 2017 – 2020 and is a key document outlining the way care services will be delivered and improved in the coming years. the Key Principles of the strategy state :

1. Services will be safe, effective and high quality
2. Services will be person-centred and seamless
3. Health improvement and prevention will be as important as treatment of illness
4. Services will be delivered as close to home as possible
5. Admission to hospital will only happen when necessary and will be brief and smooth
6. Services will be delivered efficiently, within available means
7. We are committed to 'working in partnership' with staff, communities and other organisations to deliver the best outcomes for the people we serve

NHS Borders outlined the improvements to services that board is committed to delivering. In relation to Palliative Care they stated

“Anyone who requires access to palliative care will be identified at the earliest opportunity and receive care at the right time, in the right way and in the right place, in discussion with the patient, family or carer.”

This ensures that the focus stays with the patient's wishes and preferred place of care and death. The discussions taking place will identify if the patient has a desire to fulfil their wish to die at home and the following assertions published in the clinical strategy are a statement to facilitate their preferred place of care and death.

- Information will, with the patients' permission, be shared with all those involved in their care and be updated regularly.
- People approaching the palliative and end of life phases of their illness undergo only those interventions that are effective at optimising their quality of life.
- People who are in need of end of life care will die, in their preferred place of care with the support they and their carers require.

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 **526-19** 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.