

FOI0246_2024 Response

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 regarding cases handled by Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust that involve individuals who have claimed to be possessed by demons/spirits/otherworldly entities or have sought exorcisms/treatment for their alleged condition.

Specifically, I request the following information:

1. **The number of cases recorded by Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust between January 2010 and August 2024** in which patients reported symptoms or experiences consistent with what they or others around them identified as “possession” by supposed supernatural forces. This may include, but is not limited to, patients explicitly mentioning possession, demonic influence, ghosts or spirits or requesting an exorcism as part of their care or consultation.

BSMHFT Spiritual Care Team do offer support to service users who disclose that they have experienced/ experience the afore mentioned symptoms.

However the data will be noted within the progress notes and not readily captured within our systems.

Obtaining this data will require the Trust to carry out an exhaustive and manual search of a large cohort of data, exceeding the threshold to complete this task.

The Trust therefore rely on exemption Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to deny this aspect of your request.

2. **Details of any protocols or guidelines followed by healthcare professionals in dealing with such cases.** This includes whether patients reporting these symptoms were referred to mental health services, spiritual care, or other specialized services.

BSMHFT Spiritual Care Team do not refer service users to religious / spiritual services/institutes.

However, on a Trust wide basis, we would complete an initial mental health assessment, this would include details of any presentations relating to hearing voices etc.

Based on these presentations, clinicians will make a decision as to what is the most appropriate interventions based on clinical need, and any impacting social issues.

Referrals to commissioned Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSFE) organisations would be made as part of the care plan (based on clinical and social needs).

Service users may be signposted to non-commissioned local support in their area if appropriate, but not by way of a formal referral and not to religious groups or other spiritual institutes.

3. **Information on any training provided to healthcare professionals within the Trust** on how to manage cases where patients claim to be possessed or request exorcism, including any collaboration with religious or spiritual leaders.

There is no training offered to professionals with regards to how to manage these cases within the Spiritual Care Team.

4. **The number of referrals or consultations made by Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust to external religious or spiritual organizations** (e.g., Church of England, Catholic Church, or independent spiritual practitioners) concerning cases of alleged possession or requests for exorcism.

Referrals are not made to external organisations from the Spiritual Care Team concerning these issues.

5. **Any recorded outcomes or follow-up actions** taken in these cases, including whether the patients received mental health diagnoses, were referred to external organizations, or received any form of spiritual care.

****Clarification:** For clarity, I'm interested in information that indicates whether any patients who claimed to be possessed or influenced by supernatural forces received specific psychiatric diagnoses - e.g. were they all diagnosed with the same condition or different ones? I am also interested to know whether these individuals were treated through the NHS or were referred to an external organization, and whether the treatment they received included any form of spiritual care.

Spiritual Care is offered to all inpatients and some community patients with information recorded in the Trust's patient administration system – Rio.

BSMHFT Spiritual Care Team will support and reassure those who believe they are having supernatural experiences whilst in our care.

Members of the Spiritual Care Team will not offer or carry out 'exorcisms' or refer patients to religious institutes or groups for these types of services.

The Spiritual Care Team may suggest patients speak with their local faith group for additional support.

As noted in question 1, we are unable to provide granular details of service users who claimed to be possessed or influenced by supernatural forces.

This is because obtaining the requested data will require the Trust to carry out an exhaustive and manual search of a large cohort of data, exceeding the threshold to complete this task.

The Trust therefore rely on exemption Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to deny this aspect of your request.