

29 July 2024

Dear

ATISN 20789 – A&E Policy

Thank you for your request to the Welsh Government for information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) received on 17 July 2024 relating to 'A&E Policy'. You were interested in Welsh Government policy regarding access to Emergency Departments (A&E) in Wales and subsequently requested the following:

- *a copy of the official government policy on the operation of A&E in Wales and any related documents to the decision-making process of this policy*

Response

There is no policy stating patients requiring emergency care should always be treated in their resident health board area.

Our expectation is that patients in need of emergency care should be treated in order of clinical priority and in a time commensurate to their clinical need to improve outcomes. Further, decisions on people's care should always be taken by a suitably trained clinician.

Where a patient has a clinical need to access emergency care in an emergency department, we expect provision of 24/7 access, enabling the right care to be delivered irrespective of health board boundaries.

Attending an emergency department or minor injuries unit close to your usual place of residence is generally encouraged to ensure that the appropriate follow up or community support services can be coordinated more efficiently.

However, this does not mean that a person cannot be seen in an emergency department out of their area of residency, assuming they have a condition which is appropriate for assessment and treatment at an emergency department, i.e. is of threat to life or limb. If a person's needs would be best met away from an emergency department, then we would expect them to be directed to the right service for their needs.

In March 2024, we published a [Quality Statement for Care in Emergency Departments](#) which sets out expectations of health boards when planning and delivering care from emergency departments. This is our current policy for delivery of care in emergency departments and, as stated above, does not set a policy precluding people from accessing emergency care beyond their health board area of residence.

Next Steps

The request you sent me contains personal information about you - for example, your name and address. The Welsh Government will be the data processor for this information and, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, it will be processed in order to fulfil our public task and meet our legal obligations under the Act to provide you with a response.

We will only use this personal information to deal with your request and any matters which arise as a result of it. We will keep your personal information and all other information

relating to your request for three years from the date on which your request is finally closed. Your personal information will then be disposed of securely.

Under data protection legislation, you have the right:

- to be informed of the personal data we hold about you and to access it
- to require us to rectify inaccuracies in that data
- to (in certain circumstances) object to or restrict processing
- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be 'erased'
- to (in certain circumstances) data portability
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection

For further information about the information which the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you wish to exercise your rights under the GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
CARDIFF
CF10 3NQ
Email: DataProtectionOfficer@gov.wales

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process

Yours sincerely,