

For the Record – Press Statement

Publication and reporter	Dudley News, Kelly Harris
Date of article	01/03/2017
Headline	Foreign patient bill tops £400k
First paragraph/s of article	<p>Overseas patients have racked up debts of more than £200,000 after failing to pay for treatment received by borough medics.</p> <p>Over the last three years, the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust has billed patients who are not entitled to free NHS treatment a total of £407,061.</p>
Press enquiry	The Trust was contacted by the Dudley News after issuing a Freedom of Information response which included figures relating to overseas patients who are not eligible for free NHS care.
Trust response	
<p>COMMENT FROM DR PAUL HARRISON, ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THE DUDLEY GROUP NHS FOUNDATION TRUST</p> <p>Overseas visitors who are not eligible for NHS treatment are informed that there will be a charge for their care as soon as they are identified, usually at their initial outpatient appointment or on admission to a ward. Where possible, inpatients are given their invoice before they are discharged from hospital.</p> <p>We initially ask patients to settle their bill in full within 14 days; however, payment plans are also available for those who are not able to pay the total sum immediately.</p> <p>When bills are unpaid, we follow our standard debt recovery process which involves making attempts to contact patients via letter, telephone or email. If a patient is from outside the European Economic Area (EEA), we also report the outstanding debt to the Home Office which may restrict their ability to re-enter the UK until the bill is paid.</p> <p>We see a comparatively small number of overseas visitors and so the time spent on this area is not excessive. Changes from 1st April should increase awareness of charges for those not eligible for free NHS care and should make the system for identifying patients more effective.</p>	

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Notes for editors

For further information please contact Alice Ford, Communications Officer for The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, via 01384 244403 or email

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