

# Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust - Cerner Update for Barnet Health Overview Scrutiny Committee 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020

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## 1. Introduction

In January 2020 Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust (RFL) were informed by Cerner of an issue with the automated process responsible for the distribution of both first and follow up outpatient summary letters. This resulted in the delayed delivery of over 27,000 outpatient clinic letters, covering appointments from June 2019 to mid-January 2020 to GPs and other parties.

The letters not distributed were from all specialties at Barnet Hospital and Chase Farm Hospital, and amounted to 21% of outpatient clinic letters distributed from these sites between June 2019 and January 2020.

The Cerner process problem was fixed in mid-January 2020 and the problem has not recurred.

The initial actions undertaken to address the problem included:

- The Trust declaring a serious incident;
- Communications were sent out to GP practices by the Trust;
- The Trust put in place daily checkpoint calls with Cerner to review and identify the root cause and to determine an accurate position status and scale of the incident (the problem ceased in January 2020);
- The Trust undertook an initial analysis of relevant incidents reported as moderate harm. From this review 20 patients had been identified with some harm, however, the harm was not related to the letters being delayed. An analysis of low harm entries on Datix (the national reporting system in the NHS for reporting serious incidents) was also undertaken;
- A clinical task and finish group was established, chaired by the Medical Director of Chase Farm Hospital, with the following focus:
  - Assess the risk of clinical harm with reviews to be completed by the end of March 2020 with progress monitored through clinical quality review meetings with the CCG. This process was underway but was interrupted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (see below);
  - Agree the process for distributing the letters not sent between June 2019 and January 2020, with actions in letters for appointments prior to December 2019 being initiated by the Trust. A significant proportion of letters were for information only. Letters from December 2019 and January 2020 were sent directly to general practices as they contained contemporary actions. This process was agreed by the Trust with clinical leads from the CCG.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trust undertook harm reviews on 11,000 clinic letters and found no moderate or severe harm (categories used to describe the level of harm received by the patient) due to the delay. During the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, harm reviews had been paused. The Trust have since recommenced and as of the end of May, fewer than 5,000 harm reviews were outstanding.