**PATIENT ADVICE & LIAISON SERVICE (PALS) OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE**

The Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS) provides confidential advice, support and information related to EPUT services. The service provides a point of contact for patients/ residents, their families and carers.

#### Aims of the PALS service

1.1 To respond promptly to enquiries and requests for information from patients, service-users, residents and their families and carers, as well as to the general public, in relation to EPUT services.

1.2 Where appropriate, to signpost enquiries to alternative NHS Trusts or partner organisations for assistance.

1.3 To offer an informal route for resolving issues and concerns as rapidly as possible, where a formal investigation is not needed to provide a resolution. By liaising with the relevant EPUT service, we aim to provide a response to concerns within five days.

1.4 To record the details of all enquiries and concerns raised with PALS on Datix, including the outcome of concerns and any lessons learned.

1.5 To provide insight to the EPUT Executive Team by reporting regularly to the Patient and Carer Experience Steering Group on key themes from PALS enquiries and concerns, to highlight issues and influence improvements and changes to services.

1.6 To liaise as necessary with other Health and Social Care organisations to provide ‘seamless’ resolution of patient concerns.

1.7 To provide information about the NHS Complaints procedure, including how to get independent help through Advocacy Services, to make a complaint.

#### Matters outside the remit of PALS

2.1 PALS cannot provide counselling or medical advice.

2.2 PALS is not an emergency service, and should not be contacted for urgent medical attention. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis please contact NHS 111 and select option 2. In the case of a medical emergency dial 999.

2.3 PALS is not the correct route for staff who want to raise employment concerns. These should be directed to Human Resources or raised via Freedom to Speak Up by email: [f2su.eput@nhs.net](mailto:%20f2su.eput@nhs.net) or by phone: 07814 226709.

2.4 The PALS team does not have the authority to implement changes to EPUT services, (which is the responsibility of the relevant Directorates), but it is able to pass on feedback and suggestions for change.

2.5 PALS is not an advocacy service, but it can provide details of advocacy services upon request.

#### PALS Assurance

3.1 We will show courtesy and compassion to our service users, and will strive to resolve enquiries and concerns as quickly as possible, keeping the enquirer updated regarding progress and actions taken.

3.2 We will take whatever actions are reasonably necessary to resolve concerns, including liaising with other NHS bodies or external agencies as appropriate.

3.3 We will maintain patient confidentiality and seek consent to share confidential information as appropriate in order to resolve issues.

3.4 If the matter raised is not within the remit of the PALS service or The Trust, we will endeavour to provide contact details for the appropriate person or organisation that can help.

3.5 If we have been unable to resolve a concern to the enquirer’s full satisfaction, we will provide advice regarding options for further recourse (e.g. formal complaints procedure).

#### Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 All EPUT staff are responsible for assisting service users/residents, their relatives and carers in raising concerns informally through PALS. This includes providing details of how to contact PALS on request.

4.2 All EPUT staff have a responsibility to assist the PALS team in responding to enquiries and concerns raised though the PALS service in a timely manner. This includes the prompt provision of requested information pertinent to the enquiry.

4.3 PALS Officers have a responsibility to escalate to their Line Manager or to the Head of Complaints for action to be taken, or to seek advice, regarding:

* Matters of urgent concern
* Emerging complaint trends or recurring issues that are identified
* Lack of co-operation or response from EPUT services in relation to PALS enquiries and concerns.
* Habitual, unreasonable and persistent (HUP) users of the service (see Appendix IV for more detail).

4.4. PALS Officers have a responsibility to refer to the Safeguarding Team where they know or suspect that an adult or child is vulnerable to harm.

4.5 PALS Officers are required to obtain the consent of the patient/ service user to disclose any confidential information to a third party. If the required consent is not obtained, the enquirer must be advised that it may not be possible for further action to be taken by the PALS Service.

4.6 Any disputes about confidentiality and disclosure of information to PALS shall be referred to the Trust Caldicott Guardian for decision.

4.7 The PALS and Complaints Manager is responsible for ensuring that all PALS enquiries and Local Resolutions received by the Trust are recorded on the Datix recording system.

#### Accessibility of PALS

5.1 The PALS phone line is open from 10.00-16:00 from Monday-Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) on 0800 085 7935, or alternatively by e-mail on [epunft.pals@nhs.net](mailto:epunft.pals@nhs.net) or by post to: PALS & Complaints, The Lodge, Lodge Approach, Runwell, Wickford, Essex, SS11 7XX.

5.2 The PALS service is publicised on The Trust’s website and throughout EPUT services via leaflets and posters. Staff will bring this material to the attention of anyone wishing to make a complaint or if they have a concern they would like the Trust to look into.

5.3 Information regarding the PALS and Complaints procedure can be provided in an accessible format for people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss.

**END**