

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

RF23-737

Request:

I was appalled to read on KentOnline that evidence of rats had been found in the kitchens at William Harvey Hospital.

What is EKHUFT doing about the rats and the caterer who let this happen?

I would very much like to know what steps are being taken, to ensure that this never happens again.

Response:

We can confirm East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust (EKHUFT) holds the information you have requested.

It is challenging to guarantee a complete absence of rodents in any environment, including hospitals, although it is possible to minimise and control their presence through preventive measures and ongoing management.

EKHUFT has sub-contracted the delivery of hard and soft facilities services to 2gether Support Solutions Ltd (2gether) who deliver the services in accordance with specified service agreements that form part of the agreement.

2gether's Facilities department addresses the issue by having such measures and ongoing management in place, as required by NHS England's pest control guidance and to ensure compliance with food hygiene standards.

The measures in place within EKHUFT and 2gether, include:

- **Inspections:** undertaken by 2gether's Estates team to checks for entry points, cracks, and gaps in walls, floors, and ceilings that are then sealed to prevent entry for pests.
- **Sanitation measures:** EKHUFT and 2gether maintain strict cleanliness protocols, ensuring that areas are free from food debris or waste that might attract rodents. Regular waste disposal and cleaning routines are in place.
- **Catering:** 2gether's Catering teams undertaken a full clean of each kitchen after service; a further wipe down before service; and undertake daily housekeeping inspections.
- **Waste management:** The disposal of medical waste and general garbage is done by clinical staff following strict guidelines.
- **Pest control service:** 2gether utilises professional pest control services who use methods to bait and trap rodents, complete regular inspections and take immediate action in case of infestations.
- **Grounds maintenance:** outdoor areas are maintained by 2gether to ensure they are free from overgrown vegetation to reduce the potential for hiding spots for rodents near a hospital.
- **Reporting:** EKHUFT's staff and 2gether employees are instructed on reporting procedures, to ensure that any pest infestation is addressed promptly, by calling 2gether's Facilities Helpdesk that provides a 24/7 service or by raising an incident report for investigation.

It is understandable that a hospital patient or visitor might be distressed at the thought, or sight, of rodents being present in a hospital, as staff would also be. With reference to the article published in Kent online, the Environmental Health Officer did not have any concerns about any of EKHUFT's

ward-based kitchens at the William Harvey Hospital, utilised by 2gether to provide patient feeding services.

Whilst it is not possible to entirely eliminate the risk of rodents in the hospitals, EKHUFT and 2gether have implemented a combination of methods, as detailed above, to make the hospital sites highly unattractive and inaccessible to rodents, effectively minimising the likelihood of an infestation.

(DATE OF RESPONSE: 18 DECEMBER 2023)