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Half of deaths on care pathway

MID STAFFORDSHIRE

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UP TO 50 per cent of patients who died at the scandal-hit Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust had been placed on a controversial "pathway" to death, *The Daily Telegraph* has learnt.

Figures disclosed by the hospital under the Freedom of Information Act show that use of the Liverpool Care Pathway rose sharply after the introduction of targets promoting its use in 2009.

The system of care, intended to give patients greater dignity and less pain in the final hours of their lives, is under review after claims that medical staff in hospitals throughout the UK had put people in it without proper safeguards.

It involves removing treat-

ments deemed to be more harmful than helpful including, where appropriate, reducing food and fluids.

But families have come forward to claim that their loved ones were placed on the treatment regime without any consultation or even when they were not imminently dying.

Mid Staffordshire has been at the centre of a storm over standards in the NHS after a public inquiry into the deaths of between 400 and 1,200 people between 2005 and 2009. There is no evidence those deaths were linked to the pathway, which was implemented at Mid Staffs at the end of the period in question.

The figures show its use at the trust rose from just over one in 10 of those who died at Mid Staffs in November 2009, to 50 per cent in September 2010.