

Increasing patient anger at mixed sex wards in hospitals

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THE number of patients who had to endure mixed-sex hospital ward has trebled in two years, new figures show.

Almost 8,000 patients were treated in shared accommodation in the 12 months to March, the statistics show – a rise from 2,655 in 2014/15.

NHS rules that say men and women should be treated on different wards.

It follows repeated pledges from Conservatives to end the practice, with four manifesto promises.

The Government announced a crackdown on the practice in 2010, and introduced a fining system the following year.

Hospitals must now pay out up to £250 for every mixed-sex breach – defined as a night spent by a patient on a mixed-sex ward.

The new figures show that overall, 7,771 patients stayed in mixed-sex wards between April 2016 and the start of March 2017. This compares to 5,309 in 2015/2016 and 2,655 in 2014/2015.

Last month, 776 patients stayed in mixed-sex wards – a rise from 710 the previous month, the data shows.

Almost half of the breaches in March occurred in the south of England. In total, there were 395 such cases, compared with 105 in Midlands and the East of England, 106 in London, and 170 in the North of England.

The worst was Darent Valley Hospital, in Dartford, run by Dartford And Gravesham NHS Trust, with 195 breaches. Another 65 cases were recorded by Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, with 54 at Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, 48 at Brighton And Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust and 41 at Medway Foundation trust.

Liberal Democrat health spokesman Norman Lamb said: “Far from being eliminated, the number of patients being forced to stay in single-sex accommodation has tripled since this Conservative government came to power. This is a major embarrassment for Jeremy Hunt and yet another sign of the impossible pressure our NHS is under.

“The progress we made in reducing mixed-sex wards during the coalition government is now completely unravelling.”