

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REVIEW – CERVICAL SMEARS

I write in response to your request for review of NHS Lothian's response to your Freedom of Information request about cervical smears. Having discussed your request and our response of, 16 February 2024 I can respond as follows:

Original Request and Response:

Question:

1. For your Health Board I would request the length of time between (i) the initial cervical smear being taken and (ii) the diagnostic colposcopy - for those patients with an abnormality on the initial smear.
2. In what % of these individuals was the wait:
 - A. Less than 1 month
 - B. 1 month - 2 months
 - C. 2 months - 3 months
 - D. 3 months - 4 months
 - E. 4 months - 5 months
 - F. 5 months - 6 months
 - G. Greater than 6 months

Answer:

I am advised that we do not hold data in an accessible format to obtain timescales from smear appointment date to colposcopy date.

We can only advise on the time from receiving the colposcopy referral to the appointment. Any data on turnaround time for the smear processing that precedes that and determines the requirement for colposcopy referral, would either come from an additional different system (manually) or from the national lab – thereafter these two datasets would require to be matched.

Under the Freedom of Information Act NHS Lothian is not required to create new records to enable it to respond to your enquiry. This information is not collated or held in aggregate form

and it would be necessary to review all case files relating to patients over the period you have requested to assemble the information you seek. Even if NHS Lothian did this – and there would be significant cost implications in doing so – it would be unable to respond in full to your request. The information requested is therefore exempt under section 12.1 – Cost.

Review Request:

- I would like to initiate a review as I understand the Information commissioner requires that I do this. I do consider you will hold the data because as a surgeon I do realise that you will have the dates I saw the health boards have provided this very quickly.

You will have the date at which the cervical smear was reported by your laboratory, even if you do not have the date on which the smear was taken, and you will also have the date at which colposcopy was carried out. I am therefore requesting your review.

Review Response:

As stated in the original response I must advise that NHS Lothian do not hold data in an accessible format to obtain timescales from smear appointment date to colposcopy date.

We can only advise on the time from receiving the colposcopy referral to the appointment. Any data on turnaround time for the smear processing that precedes that and determines the requirement for colposcopy referral, would either come from an additional different system (manually) or from the national lab – thereafter these two datasets would require to be matched.

Under the Freedom of Information Act NHS Lothian is not required to create new records to enable it to respond to your enquiry. This information is not collated or held in aggregate form and it would be necessary to review all case files relating to patients over the period you have requested to assemble the information you seek. Even if NHS Lothian did this – and there would be significant cost implications in doing so – it would be unable to respond in full to your request. The information requested is therefore exempt under section 12.1 – Cost.

I am further advised that if it is helpful we can provide the waiting times for colposcopy, but please note this is different to the data requested.

If you are not satisfied with this response you still have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner who you can contact at the address below or using the Scottish Information Commissioner's Office online appeals service at www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal. If you remain dissatisfied with the Commissioner's response you then have the option to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law.

Scottish Information Commissioner
Kinburn Castle



Doubledykes Road
St Andrews, Fife
KY16 9DS
Telephone: 01334 464610
Fax: 01334 464611
e-mail: enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info

Yours sincerely

**Freedom of Information Reviewer/
NHS Lothian**
cc: Executive Nurse Director