

Date: 05/04/2024
Your Ref:
Our Ref: 8529

Enquiries to : Richard Mutch
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Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

I write in response to your request for information in relation to travel reimbursement.

Question:

- Does your health board reimburse patients using wheelchair accessible taxis to attend scheduled appointments.
- How much has your health board spent in each of the last five years on reimbursing patients using wheelchair accessible taxis to attend scheduled appointments.
- In the event that your health board does not reimburse patients using wheelchair accessible taxis to attend scheduled appointments, what provision does your health board have in place to allow these patients to attend.

Answer:

As per the Department of Health's "Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme" (HTCS) and the Scottish Government's "Are You Entitled to Help with Health Costs" (HCS1), NHS Lothian -

A patient can get help with necessary travel costs, to hospital for NHS treatment, if they are in receipt of certain benefits; are entitled to, or named on, a valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate; are named on a valid NHS Exemption Certificate (HC2) issued under the terms of the NHS Low Income Scheme; or are a war pensioner and the hospital treatment is for their pensionable disablement. Note that Incapacity Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance (Contributory), Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and Scottish Disability Payment are specifically excluded as they are not income-related.

If the use of public transport possess difficulties and hospital transport service it not used NHS Lothian will reimburse community transport scheme costs and / or taxi costs. As per the guidance the use of taxis must have been agreed in advance by the Consultant and recorded in the patient's medical file.

The amount NHS Lothian incur on reimbursing patients using wheelchair accessible taxis to attend scheduled outpatient appointments is not separately recorded. 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 finance ledgers relating to patients and reimbursements 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 hope the information provided helps with your request.

If you are unhappy with our response to your request, you do have the right to request us to review it. Your request should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If our decision is unchanged following a review and you remain dissatisfied with this, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner within 6 months of receipt of our review response. You can do this by 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.

If you require a review of our decision to be carried out, please write to the FOI Reviewer at the email address at the head of this letter. The review will be undertaken by a Reviewer who was not involved in the original decision-making process.

FOI responses (subject to redaction of personal information) may appear on NHS Lothian's Freedom of Information website at: <https://org.nhsllothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing, Midwifery and AHPs
Cc: Chief Executive