

Date 07/04/2025  
Your Ref  
Our Ref 9848

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Dear

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

I write in response to your request for information in relation to communication systems used by NHS Lothian.

Question:

### 1. Policy and Procedure

- Please provide a copy of NHS Lothian's current policy and procedure on the use of telephone and online appointments, including video call systems.
- Please confirm the name of all video call systems currently in use by NHS Lothian e.g. Microsoft Teams, Near Me etc.

Answer:

We use NHS Near Me. We create clinic templates within TRAK to allow services to run their clinics in person, on the phone, or with video.

Question:

### 2. Near Me system

- When was the Near Me video call system first introduced in NHS Lothian?
- What training programs or resources have been provided to staff to ensure they are adequately trained in using the Near Me system?
- How is the effectiveness of this training evaluated?
- Is there ongoing training or support systems in place for new staff and/or to provide refresher training?

### 3. Challenges and Lessons Learned

- What have been the biggest challenges in implementing and adopting the Near Me system within NHS Lothian?

### 4. Staff Engagement and Buy-In

Headquarters  
Mainpoint  
102 West Port  
Edinburgh EH3 9DN

Chair Professor John Connaghan CBE  
Chief Executive Professor Caroline Hiscox  
*Lothian NHS Board is the common name of Lothian Health Board*

- How was staff engagement ensured during the planning and implementation phases of the Near Me system?
- Is there universal buy-in from all staff (including medical staff, nursing staff, admin. Staff etc) regarding the use of the Near Me system? If not, what are the main concerns or resistance points?
- Have staff reported any challenges or barriers in using the Near Me system, and how have these been addressed?

#### 4. Exemptions

- Are all departments expected to offer patients a consultation via Near Me, where the same appointment is able to offered as a telephone option for the same consultation?
- Are there any outpatient departments within NHS Lothian that are currently allowed to not use video call systems, where a telephone appointment can be made available?
- If so, please list these departments and provide the rationale for this exemption.

#### 5. Principles of Use

- What were the primary drivers or motivations for adopting the Near Me system within NHS Lothian?
- What are NHS Lothian's principles for using telephone and online appointment systems, particularly in relation to ensuring accessibility for disabled people and those who are unemployed?
- Are there any specific measures in place to support these groups in accessing appointments via these systems?

#### 6. Online Information

Please provide links to any information available online about NHS Lothian's use of telephone and online appointment systems, including video calls.

Answer:

I am advised that we are not responsible for policy, training or feedback on what is done any why. The NearMe toolset is provided and managed by the National Video Team who report into NHS NSS. For further information coctact NHS NSS- <https://www.nss.nhs.scot/contact/>

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](http://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.nhslothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

**ALISON MACDONALD**  
**Executive Director, Nursing**  
Cc: Chief Executive