

Dear

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – OVERSEAS PATIENTS

I write in response to your request for information in relation to overseas patients treated in NHS Lothian.

### Questions:

The below questions relate to overseas/foreign patients who were given NHS treatment while visiting Scotland that they were required to pay for. Please can you tell me:

1. The number of patients who were not entitled to free treatment on the health service in each of the last five financial years (2019/20, 2020/21, 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25). Please provide a breakdown of where the patients were from (i.e. the country they were visiting Scotland from).
2. The number of patients with outstanding debt following free treatment in each of the last five financial years (2019/20, 2020/21, 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25).
3. The total outstanding debt as a result of free treatment given to overseas patients in each of the last five financial years (2019/20, 2020/21, 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25).
4. The total portion written off as bad debt in each of the years?

### Answer:

The information you have requested is detailed in the table below. I have not released numbers of 5 or fewer in the table, as this information could lead to the identification of the individuals involved. Since we do not have their consent to release their personal data, the information is exempt under section 38 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 as to provide it would breach the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018.

Information about the country the patient was visiting from is not collected centrally. Information may be held in individual patient records, but in order to provide the information you request it would be necessary to review each patient record over the period you have specified, requiring significant resources. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, NHS Lothian is not required to respond to your request if the resources required to do so equate to more than £600 in cost.

Overseas patients costs, NHS Lothian						
Year	No. of patients	Value of invoices raised	No. of patients with outstanding debt	Value of outstanding debt	Amount written off	Write off as % of invoices raised
2019-20	185	£848,626	≤5	£77,140	£147,032	17.3%
2020-21	74	£279,788	≤2	£78,995	£88,341	31.6%
2021-22	77	£378,705	9	£127,405	£91,874	24.3%
2022-23	148	£739,198	11	£94,036	£98,948	13.4%
2023-24	231	£1,373,457	35	£430,168	£45,110	3.3%
2024-25	234	£1,867,259	101	£999,189	£458	0.0%

## Question:

5. The departments most commonly used by overseas visitors? Please provide a breakdown of where the patient is originally from.

## Answer:

Information about the departments in which overseas patients were treated is not collected centrally. Information may be held in individual patient records, but in order to provide the information you request it would be necessary to review each patient record over the period you have specified, requiring significant resources. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, NHS Lothian is not required to respond to your request if the resources required to do so equate to more than £600 in 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 <https://www.foi.scot/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 reviewer at the address at the top 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>

Yours sincerely

**ALISON MACDONALD**  
**Executive Director of Nursing Midwifery and AHPs**  
Cc: Chief Executive