

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – SPITTAL STREET CENTRE

I write in response to your request for information in relation to blood tests at the Spittal Street Centre.

Question:

Please can you provide me with answers to the following queries in relation to the Spittal Street Centre (referred to forthwith as SSC):

1. When the centre began requesting patients indicate their reason for booking blood tests (for 'image and performance-enhancing' reasons, versus relating to 'gender reasons')
2. The reasoning behind this

Answer:

The reason for the blood test being requested has routinely been asked since this service has been provided.

Question:

3. When the decision to stop providing blood testing services for patients citing 'gender reasons' was made (forthwith described as 'Date of Stoppage')

Answer:

The last clinic which patients attended for blood tests for gender reasons was on 3 March 2025. The decision to stop providing this service was made 4 weeks prior to this.

Question:

4. What the reason for the above was - whether financial, related to staff training, capacity, or otherwise

Answer:

The decision to stop providing blood tests for gender patients was taken for the following reasons:

1. Staff skills insufficient to manage complexities

2. Financial constraints
3. Not fitting with NHS Lothian gender reassignment pathway
4. Clinical governance is not robust
5. Sits out with core Harm Reduction Team (HRT) service description in terms of delivery for harm reduction in addictions and blood borne virus (BBV).

Question:

5. Who made the above decision, how this was communicated to staff at the SSC, and whether there was any decision-making process involving wider staff.

Answer:

All staff working on the clinic were consulted in making this decision.

Question:

6. Whether additional training to allow for staff to continue providing blood test services for 'gender reasons' has been considered, what the cost of said training would be, whether this is being pursued.

Answer:

Additional staff training was not considered, due to the other reasons agreed for ceasing to provide this service.

Question:

7. From the previous 2 years up to the date of this FOI request, what the number of services users receiving blood tests were, per-category of cited reasons (1) gender or 2) performance-enhancing.

Answer:

Between 19 February 2024 and 19 February 2025 369 patients received a blood test at the clinic, of whom 95 were attending for gender reasons. I am unable to provide data for the previous year due to inconsistent recording.

Question:

8. Budget allocation for different services at the SSC for the previous 3 years up to and including 2024-25, and prospective budget for 2025-26 if available.

Answer:

I am not able to split the budget for the Harm Reduction Team into the different services provided by the team, as this is managed as a single budget for the whole team.

Question:

9. In particular, budget allocated to training of staff for services provided at the clinic per-year.

Answer:

There is no specific training budget for this clinic, training would be paid for as part of the overall department budget.

Question:

10. Number of staff employed at the clinic in a blood test service-providing capacity

Answer:

Three members of staff are trained to work in this clinic, including holiday cover. The clinic is open one day per week on Mondays.

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
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Cc: Chief Executive