

Date 17/06/2025
Your Ref
Our Ref 10131

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
Extension 35687
Direct Line 0131 465 5687
loth.freedomofinformation@nhs.scot
richard.mutch@nhs.scot

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION - SHORT ARM CASTS

I write in response to your request for information in relation to short arm casts.

Question:

- I would be grateful if you could provide the following data for the past three calendar years (or the most recent available), preferably broken down annually:

1. Clinical & Treatment Metrics

- Annual number of short arm casts applied
- Breakdown by clinical indication (e.g. distal radius, scaphoid fractures, soft tissue injuries)
- Average duration of immobilisation
- Refracture or re-casting rate within 6–12 weeks
- Complication rates (e.g. skin breakdown, pressure sores, compartment syndrome)
- Follow-up appointment frequency (for cast checks/removal)
- Percentage of patients requiring imaging during or after casting

3. Operational & Workforce Metrics

- Average staff time required for short arm cast application
- Number of certified staff per site qualified to apply/remove short arm casts
- Backlog or average wait times for fracture clinic appointments involving casting
- Local variation or standardisation in casting practices

4. Patient Outcomes / Experience

- Patient satisfaction scores related to short arm casts (comfort, weight, duration)
- Compliance rates (e.g. early removal, misuse)
- Patient-reported issues (e.g. hygiene difficulties, discomfort, lifestyle interference)
- Average recovery time (e.g. return to work or function)

5. Replacement & Reuse Metrics*

- Percentage of casts requiring unplanned replacement

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*

- Early cast removals due to complications or discomfort
- Policy or practice on reusability of casting materials

7. Advanced Clinical & Pathway Metrics

- Demographic breakdown of patients receiving short arm casts (e.g. age, gender)
- Setting of injury management (A&E, outpatient, GP referral)
- Percentage of patients transitioning to splints post-casting
- Rate of physiotherapy referrals following short arm casting
- Average number of radiographic controls per patient
- Time from injury to definitive immobilisation
- Cast failure rates requiring re-casting

Answer:

We document all our treatment/care as progress notes on the EPR for each patient. However we only keep our request forms for 1 year so unfortunately we are unable to extract 3 years worth of records. Most of information requested would be very difficult to extract from each individual patient care records and will cover different timescales.

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.

Question:

2. Economic Metrics

- Average cost per short arm cast treatment (including materials, labour, appointments)
- Cost comparison between plaster and fibreglass casts
- Staff time allocation per cast application (by professional category)
- Number of casts outsourced to private providers (if applicable)
- Costs associated with cast-related complications or unplanned re-interventions

6. Procurement & Usage

- Annual volume of short arm casting materials purchased
- Types of materials used (e.g. fibreglass, plaster of Paris, thermoformable)
- Approved suppliers and average price per unit
- Stock turnover rates or average inventory for casting materials

8. Financial & Procurement Insights

- Total annual spend on casting materials
- Breakdown of cost components (materials, staff, imaging, etc.)

- Comparison of in-house vs. outsourced casting costs
- Budget caps or cost thresholds for orthopaedic consumables
- Contract duration and renewal cycles for casting supplies
- Tender evaluation criteria for casting materials
- Frequency of backorders or stock shortages
- Criteria for adopting new immobilisation technologies
- Barriers to adoption of new casting products (if recorded)

Answer:

This information is not held in a centrally extractable format. Casts will be going on in A&E, MIU, and trauma clinics. Quality of the information to sift out how many casts and of what type won't likely exist. 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 procurement and finance 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.

The Cost Book as detail which says casts can be done in A&E or OP clinics, but that the cost figures for both in the Cost Book are broader categories.

[Costs Book publication - Costs Book - Finance within the NHS - System monitoring, accountability and quality of care - Healthcare system - Public Health Scotland](#)

I am sorry I cannot help 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
Cc: Chief Executive