

Date 04/07/2025
Your Ref
Our Ref 10216

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
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Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – BREAST SCREENING

I write in response to your request for information in relation to breast screening.

Question:

1. The longest time period (in days) in between sending out appointment letters for breast screening to any region/location?

I am looking to find out the longest period of time women have experienced between each breast screening appointment I know that by policy it is around every three years but I am looking for the specific number of days.

Answer:

Breast screening participants are invited in GP practice cohorts according to a 3 yearly schedule. In Lothian there are 116 GP practices with varying population sizes of women who are eligible for breast screening. Data on waits between appointments cannot be extracted by health board due to the size of the dataset, therefore the data provided below relates to all women in the South-East Scotland catchment area of the Borders, South-West Fife, Eastern Forth Valley, and Lothian. We do not collect data relating to the number of days women wait between screening appointments by health board area. The data that is collected and provided below relates to the wait time in months for women in the South-East Scotland catchment (Table 1).

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.

The data shows the number of returning clients appointed to screening by year (excluding those attending for the first time aged 50-52), alongside the average time in months against

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

performance. Since 2021, the longest time between screening offers for 95% of women is 46 months. The service is currently operating within 3 months of the 3 yearly target.

Table 1: Wait time in months for women in the South-East Scotland catchment (2021 – June 2025)

Year	Total Returning Clients Appointed	95% appointed within	Performance vs 3 yr target
2021	63,346	46 months	10m over
2022	57,735	45 months	9m over
2023	51,672	48 months	12m over
2024	52,578	41 months	3m over
Jan-Jun 2025	26,314	41 months	3m over

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.nhslothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing
 Cc: Chief Executive