

Date: 20/01/2026
Our Ref: 10980
Enquiries to loth.freedomofinformation@nhs.scot

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – MEDICAL GRADE FREEZERS

I write in response to your request for information in relation to medical grade freezers in NHS Lothian.

Question:

1. Does your Trust hold a record or inventory of medical-grade freezer units used for the storage of biological, histopathology, research, or biobanking tissue samples? If yes, please provide the (a) number of units and (b) storage temperature category (for example -20°C, -80°C)

Answer:

There is no overall freezer inventory in NHS Lothian, each department has its own inventory. Laboratory medicine has one -80C freezer for histopathology, three -80C freezers for tissue governance research, and two -20C and one -80C for the EMERGE group.

Question:

2. Are any of these freezer units currently used for the rapid freezing and/or long-term storage of brain tissue samples? If yes, please state (a) the number of units used for brain tissue and (b) the typical storage temperature used.

Answer:

Yes, the histopathology freezer is used for storage of brain tissue, with a temperature of -80C.

Question:

3. Regardless of current use, does the Trust have freezer units capable of supporting fresh- or flash- frozen brain tissue storage that is suitable for therapeutic development. Does the Trust currently have access to rapid freezing equipment suitable for brain tissue?

Answer:

There may be potential for other freezer units to be used for this, but other support infrastructure and information would be required. Access to rapid freezing equipment is

limited by access to liquid nitrogen and areas for liquid nitrogen storage for snap freezing at certain locations.

Question:

4. Only if feasible within the FOI time and cost limit, please indicate whether any existing freezer unit in the Trust could be repurposed or shared between departments to enable brain tissue storage or expand current capacity.

Answer:

There may be potential for this, but other support infrastructure and information would be required.

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