

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – SLEEP APNOEA

I write in response to your request for information in relation to sleep apnoea and private clinics

Question:

- The information I am looking for (specific to my circumstance, patient in Edinburgh/Lothians, registered with Links Medical Centre, asking about going private for sleep apnoea assessment/diagnosis/treatment and psychiatric treatment)
 1. What is the average wait time for being referred to sleep medicine (or whichever department/team deals with sleep apnoea)? I am under the assumption is 34 weeks for urgent cases, please confirm. What is it for non-urgent cases?

Answer:

I am advised that this is too vague to provide a meaningful response. There are obviously a wide range of psychiatric / mental health services across Lothian with a wide range of waiting times which cross into this area.

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. What private sleep clinics do they accept the assessment/diagnosis of? I understand that not all private clinics are accepted by the NHS depending on the condition (such as for ADHD), so I want to find out specifically which ones a patient should go to if they want the NHS to honour the private diagnosis.

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*

3. If the NHS only accepts certain private clinics' input, how can a patient tell them apart from ones the NHS does not? What is the difference? Why? etc.
4. If a patient were to go private for part or all of the process, and drop back into the NHS for the remainder of the process, what can the patient expect from that? For example, shorter wait times as it may jump straight to treatment, or it making no difference, or making it harder to get treatment because part of the process was not through NHS, or something else entirely.
5. What can a patient expect if they do go private for some or all of this process with regards to it tying into the NHS?
6. Does going private multiple times affect getting NHS care in anyway? Many people seem to be under the impression that if you go private more than once that you are forced to opt out of all NHS care.
7. I'm also looking for general guidance on going private to help speed up the process, as I'm pretty desperate and it's negatively affecting every aspect of my life contributing the just awful mental health
8. Additionally, I intend to also go private for psychiatric treatment, so have the same questions regarding that also as I am seeking general guidance on the process.

Answer:

I am advised that there is no jumping the queue for treatment by accessing a private diagnosis. The draft position is being finalised by the pan-Lothian group, but is informed by NHS Lothian policy on private diagnoses in general. The principles are as described below.

In 2025, the four Health and Social Care Partnership agreed to a Pan-Lothian approach to Private and overseas Protocol, establishing the principle that all such referrals:

- *Must enter through GP referral routes;*
- *Must meet standard referral thresholds;*
- *Are added to the standard (True) waiting list; and*
- *Receive no advantage or disadvantage due to private/overseas status.*

Anyone with a private diagnosis will be placed on the assessment waiting list accordingly and the information provided will be assessed when they reach the top of the list. This includes people seen by NHS clinicians privately.

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

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
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Cc: Chief Executive