

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

I write in response to your request for information in relation to breast reconstruction surgery in NHS Lothian.

Question:

1. Does your Health Board provide breast reconstruction surgery directly for patients undergoing mastectomy for breast cancer?
2. If breast reconstruction is not provided within your Health Board, which Health Board(s) or external centre(s) are patients referred to?

Answer:

Yes, this is provided by NHS Lothian.

Question:

3. Which types of breast reconstruction are available to patients within your Board or via formal referral pathways?

Implant-based reconstruction
Latissimus dorsi flap
DIEP flap
Other autologous flap reconstruction

Answer:

NHS Lothian provides all the breast reconstruction types listed. Other reconstructions carried out include TUG flap, LICAP/TAP flap/MICAP, fat grafting and msTRAM.

Question:

4. Are there any formal eligibility criteria, thresholds, or policies for access to breast reconstruction (including immediate or delayed reconstruction), such as:

Limits on number/type of revision procedures
Limits on time period in which the revision procedures needs to be undertaken
BMI thresholds

Smoking cessation requirements
Diabetes control requirements
Comorbidity-related exclusions
Other access criteria

Please provide copies of any relevant written policies where available.

Answer:

Yes. There is no strict limit on the number of revision procedures, but the aim is for one operation.

BMI Threshold – BMI of 30.

Smoking – no smoking for at least 3 months

Diabetes – HbA1c must be close to the upper limit for normal, 41.

Comorbidity – yes, this may affect the decision to carry out surgery.

Age – fitness will be assessed for patients over 60 years.

Question:

5. Is there availability/funding for breast surgery on the contralateral breast (the breast without breast cancer) for means of providing symmetry to any planned reconstructive procedure of the breast with breast cancer?

Answer:

Yes.

Question:

6. What is the average waiting time for:

Immediate breast reconstruction following mastectomy

Delayed breast reconstruction following mastectomy?

Answer:

The current wait for immediate breast reconstruction is 4-6 weeks for surgery. The wait for delayed breast reconstruction is 20-30 weeks.

Question:

7. Approximately how many patients per year are referred outside your Health Board for breast reconstruction services?

Answer:

In 2025 54 procedures were carried out. Of these 33 were resident in Lothian, and 21 were referred to NHS Lothian from other Scottish Health Boards.

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.nhslothian.scot/FOI>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
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Cc: Chief Executive