

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – BIPOLAR AFFECTIVE DISORDER WAITING TIMES

I write in response to your request for information in relation to waiting times for bipolar affective disorder treatment in NHS Lothian.

Question:

1. I request a summary of average waiting times from GP referral to initial assessment appointment for bipolar affective disorder within NHS Lothian. Specifically, this should be average times for non-emergency appointments (e.g. not presenting with active psychosis) and, if possible, I would also like to know specific timelines where a diagnosis is made of Bipolar Type 2.

Answer:

The main pathway for diagnosis of bipolar disorder is through general psychiatry outpatients, where assessment would take place. In the last 6 months (1 February – 31 August 2026), the mean waiting time from referral to first appointment for psychiatry was 10.9 weeks and the median wait was 8 weeks.

Question:

2. I would like to request information on available treatment pathways and support available for this condition within the same area - in further detail than that this is managed by NHS Lothian Psychological Therapies.

Answer:

The diagnosis for bipolar disorder is normally carried out by a psychiatrist. People who have had this diagnosis may be seen within the Community Mental Health Team by a psychologist, or by the Psychological Therapies service, depending on the level of need. Where the person's bipolar disorder means they require more intensive support then they may have access to a Multidisciplinary Team approach as part of a Community Mental Health Team, or to Intensive Home Treatment if 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.nhslothian.scot/FOI>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director of Nursing Midwifery and AHPs
Cc: Chief Executive