

Date 07 October 2026
Our Ref 11787

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Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – CANCER SERVICES

I write in response to your request for information in relation to cancer services.

Question:

1. Any workforce modelling undertaken since 2023 regarding the oncology, radiology, pathology and cancer nursing workforce required to achieve national cancer waiting time Standards.

Answer:

Since 2023, workforce planning and modelling has been undertaken through a number of programmes and reviews relating to cancer services. This includes workforce planning associated with the Edinburgh Cancer Centre programme, regional workforce reviews undertaken with the South East Scotland Cancer Network (SCAN), capacity and demand modelling to support Cancer Waiting Times improvement, and cancer service redesign activities. These exercises have considered workforce requirements across a range of professional groups including oncology, radiology, pathology and cancer nursing services.

Question:

2. Please provide the current policy, protocol or guidance governing the prioritisation or escalation of patients with suspected aggressive or rapidly progressing cancers.

Answer:

NHS Lothian manages suspected cancer referrals within the national Scottish framework for Urgent Suspicion of Cancer referrals. The key national guidance includes the Scottish Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer 2025, the Guidance for the management of Urgent Suspicion of Cancer (USC) referrals, and the Once for Scotland Cancer Waiting Times Effective Breach Analysis 2023. These set out expectations for referral, clinical triage, prioritisation, escalation, breach analysis and governance.

Question:

3. Any audits, reviews or analyses undertaken since 2023 regarding patients whose cancer diagnosis or treatment occurred later than clinically recommended.

Answer:

Since 2023, relevant audits, reviews and analyses include national cancer waiting times breach analysis guidance, Public Health Scotland cancer waiting times reporting, SCAN QPI audit and exception reporting, tumour-specific SCAN comparative audit reports, and NHS Lothian cancer pathway improvement reviews. Examples include SCAN lung cancer audit reporting for patients diagnosed in 2024, SCAN bladder cancer audit reporting for patients diagnosed in 2023-24.

Key documents:

1. Scottish Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer 2025 [Scottish Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer 2025 - gov.scot](#)
2. Guidance for the management of Urgent Suspicion of Cancer referrals [Guidance for the management of Urgent Suspicion of Cancer \(USC\) referrals | Right Decisions](#)
3. Once for Scotland Cancer Waiting Times Effective Breach Analysis 2023 [Cancer waiting times - effective breach analysis 2023: standard operating procedure - gov.scot](#)
4. Public Health Scotland 31-day and 62-day Cancer Waiting Times data [Cancer Waiting Times - Datasets - Scottish Health and Social Care Open Data](#)
5. SCAN QPI comparative audits and exception reports [Comparative Audit Reports – SCAN Scotland](#)

Question:

4. Any Serious Adverse Event Reviews, Significant Adverse Event Reviews or equivalent investigations since 2023 where delay in cancer diagnosis or treatment was identified as a contributory factor.

Answer:

I am advised that since 2023 we have had a total of five or fewer adverse events. Of these, five or fewer are still being reviewed. Due to the very small numbers of report and the specific and identifiable nature of them, and that the fact that some of the reviews are ongoing, it is not possible to release any of the reports even in a redacted format.

To protect the identity of the individuals involved any figure of 5 or less has not been shown in this response. Since we do not have their consent to release this data from their records, the information is exempt under section 38(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act i.e. to provide it would breach the Data Protection Act (2018).

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