

Date 08 October 2026
Your Ref
Our Ref 11876

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
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Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – PLASTIC SURGERY COMPLICATIONS

I write in response to your request for information in relation privately funded cosmetic or plastic surgery.

Question:

I would like to request anonymised statistical information regarding patients who have required unplanned NHS Lothian assessment, treatment and/or admission following complications arising after privately funded cosmetic or plastic surgery.

For each of the calendar years 2024, 2025 and 2026 to date, please provide:

1. The total number of patients who required unplanned assessment and/or treatment from NHS Lothian following privately funded cosmetic or plastic surgery.

I would be grateful if this is not limited solely to Emergency Department attendances. Where recorded, please include patients who:

- attended an Emergency Department;
- were transferred or referred from a private hospital/provider;
- were referred directly to, admitted under, or assessed by Plastic Surgery, General Surgery or another relevant surgical/specialist team;
- were reviewed by an NHS surgeon or plastic surgeon in relation to a postoperative complication;
- attended a surgical assessment unit, ward or other NHS service;
- or otherwise required unplanned NHS assessment or treatment relating to a complication following privately funded cosmetic or plastic surgery.

2. Of these patients, the number who required admission to an NHS Lothian hospital.

3. Where recorded, please provide a breakdown of the number of patients who required:

- emergency or unplanned surgery/re-operation;
- treatment for postoperative haemorrhage or haematoma;
- treatment for postoperative infection;
- treatment for wound complications;
- blood transfusion;

- inpatient admission or observation following the complication.
4. Where available, please provide a breakdown by the NHS hospital or service which provided the assessment or treatment, including St John's Hospital, Livingston.
 5. Where the treating specialty is recorded, please provide a breakdown by specialty, particularly Plastic Surgery and General Surgery.
 6. Where the type of original private procedure is recorded, please provide a breakdown by procedure or category of procedure.
In particular, I would be grateful for any figures held relating to complications following breast surgery, including:
 - breast reduction;
 - breast augmentation;
 - mastopexy/breast uplift;
 - or other cosmetic breast procedures.
 7. For the cases included within the figures above, where the originating private hospital/provider is recorded and can be disclosed without identifying an individual patient, please provide the name of the private hospital/provider associated with each case or reported category.

For example, where a case involved postoperative haemorrhage/haematoma, infection, wound complication, hospital admission or emergency re-operation, I would be grateful if the originating private provider could also be shown alongside that information where held and where disclosure is permitted.

I am not requesting any information capable of identifying the individual patient. I am seeking only the name of the private healthcare provider at which the original privately funded procedure was undertaken.

If providing provider information at individual case level would create a risk of patient identification due to small numbers, please instead provide the information grouped by private provider, showing for each provider, where held:

- number of patients requiring NHS assessment or treatment;
- nature/category of complication;
- number requiring NHS admission;
- number requiring emergency or unplanned surgery/re-operation;
- type/category of original private procedure;
- NHS hospital/service providing treatment;
- and treating specialty.

Within this information, please specifically include St Ellen's Hospital, Livingston and/or Cosmedicare where they are recorded as the originating private provider.

8. If NHS Lothian cannot provide a complete provider breakdown, please confirm whether St Ellen's Hospital and/or Cosmedicare can nevertheless be identified within the information held and, if so, please provide the relevant aggregate figures for 2024, 2025 and 2026 to date.
9. Please confirm whether NHS Lothian routinely records the originating private hospital/provider when a patient requires NHS assessment or treatment for a complication following privately funded surgery.
If so, please confirm how this information is recorded or coded.
If the originating provider is not held as a discrete or routinely reportable field, please confirm whether it may instead be identifiable through routinely recorded information such as:
- referral source;
 - transfer source;
 - treating specialty;
 - provider information;
 - onward referral;
 - discharge destination;
 - or follow-up arrangements.
10. Where recorded, please provide the number of patients who, following NHS Lothian assessment, treatment and/or admission for a complication of privately funded cosmetic or plastic surgery, were discharged or referred back to their original private hospital/provider for ongoing postoperative care or follow-up.

Where the destination provider can be identified, I would specifically request that the private provider is named alongside the aggregate information where disclosure is possible, including St Ellen's Hospital and/or Cosmedicare where applicable.

If a numerical figure cannot be provided, please confirm whether onward referral, discharge or return to a named private provider is held as a searchable or reportable field.

11. Where NHS Lothian holds information regarding the financial cost of providing unplanned or emergency NHS treatment for complications arising following privately funded cosmetic or plastic surgery, please provide any available aggregate figures for 2024, 2025 and 2026 to date.
Where provider-specific cost information is held, please provide the aggregate costs associated with each private provider where disclosure is possible, including any costs associated with NHS treatment following procedures undertaken at St Ellen's Hospital/Cosmedicare.

If costs cannot be identified by individual private provider, I would be grateful for any broader figures held regarding the cost to NHS Lothian of assessing and treating complications arising from privately funded cosmetic or plastic surgery.

For clarity, I am requesting aggregate statistical information only. I do not require names, dates of birth, addresses, CHI numbers, medical-record numbers, exact dates of individual treatment or any other information capable of identifying individual patients.

I appreciate that where numbers are very small, disclosure controls may be necessary. If exact figures or case-level provider information cannot be disclosed for this reason, I would be grateful if the information could instead be provided in an appropriately suppressed or grouped format, for example “fewer than five”, where possible.

I also appreciate that some of the requested information may not be held as discrete or routinely reportable data fields. I am not requesting that NHS Lothian manually review individual patient records where doing so would exceed the applicable cost limit. Rather, I would be grateful for all information that can reasonably be extracted from existing records and an explanation of which elements cannot be identified or reported.

If NHS Lothian does not hold some of the requested information, please identify which elements are held and, where possible, advise whether another public authority may hold the remaining information.

Answer:

This information is not held in a centrally extractable format due to the lack of coding. It would require us to look through all attendances within Emergency Department and Plastics and even then, this would not produce accurate information. There are no non-surgical aesthetic procedures carried out by independent practitioner with the plastic surgery unit the Lothian wide plastic service.

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.

It is also not possible to provide further assistance as there is no way to reduce the scope of your request and produce meaningful and accurate data.

If we were to manually examine Emergency Department records (because not coded) the total cost of answering this request would be: £937,500. This sum has been calculated as follows: Estimated number of records to be located and reviewed based on number of attendances at the Emergency Department per year of 125,000 times 3 years is a total of 375,000. Estimated time to review each record is 10 minutes which equates to 62,500 hours work at £15.00 per hour for a member of staff to carry out the review. This does not take into account presentations within Plastics (which might also be duplicates).

I am sorry I cannot help further 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