Lothian NHS Board

NHS Lothian Headquarters
Waverley Court
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh
EH8 8BG
www.nhslothian.scot

Date 12 October 2026
Your Ref
Our Ref 11923

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
Extension 35687
Direct Line 0131 465 5687
loth.freedomofinformation@nhs.scot
richard.mutch@nhs.scot

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – QUEER MILK GROUP

I write in response to your request for information in relation to Queer Milk Group.

Question:
1. Any recorded information held by NHS Lothian regarding this group, including correspondence, meeting notes, briefings or referral arrangements.
2. Any recorded information indicating whether NHS Lothian staff have attended, facilitated, referred patients to, or signposted patients to this group.
3. Any guidance or material held by NHS Lothian which names or signposts to this group.
4. Any recorded clinical, safeguarding or governance risk assessment undertaken in relation to this group.

Answer:

1.	NHS Lothian does not fund or signpost patients to this group. NHS Lothian has not corresponded with this group and there are no referral arrangements. Two previous FOI responses (11777 and 11785) were submitted in July 2026 related to the Queer Milk Group. Emails are attached discussing NHS Lothian's response. A briefing from LGBT Health & Wellbeing is also attached in response to the recent media interest in this group.
2.	There are no such documents.
3.	There are no such documents. NHS Lothian does not signpost patients to this group.
4.	There are no such documents.

Please note that NHS Lothian has a policy of not releasing the names and details of staff (and non-staff) below a senior level. This is considered exempt under Section 38(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 – personal information.

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
Enc.

4 Duncan Place, EH6 8HW
lgbthealth.org.uk
admin@lgbthealth.org.uk
0131 564 3970

Date: 30th July 2026

Dear Steff,

Media Coverage of Queer Milk Peer-Support Group

You may have seen recent media coverage concerning one of LGBT Health and Wellbeing's community groups, Queer Milk peer-support group. As a valuable supporter of our work, I wanted to write to you directly to provide some factual context, as much of the reporting has been innaccurate or miselading.

Queer Milk is a small, monthly peer-support group for LGBTQ+ parents and carers, who are breastfeeding, chestfeeding, expressing, or giving human milk to their babies. Like all of our community groups, its purpose is to reduce isolation, build connection, and create a supportive environment where people can share their experiences with others who understand them.

I'd like to be clear that it is **not** a clinical service. LGBT Health and Wellbeing does not prescribe medication, induce lactation, provide medical treatment, or offer clinical advice about infant feeding. Parents and carers requiring medical advice are encouraged to seek support from appropriately qualified NHS professionals, including their midwife, health visitor, or GP.

Some reporting has incorrectly stated that the group meets weekly; it meets once each month when numbers and interest dictate. Other reports have suggested that significant sums of public funding are provided for this group. This is also innaccurate. The funding figures being quoted relate to LGBT Health and Wellbeing's wider work across Scotland, including our mental health services, counselling, community programmes, specialist services, national helpline, and work to address inequalities experienced by LGBTQ+ people. They do not represent funding for the Queer Milk peer-support group.

Some of the reporting has focused on the use of the term "chestfeeding". Whilst language evolved and people will have differing views on the terms they use, "chestfeeding" is recognised by the NHS and is used by some trans and non-binary parents and carers.

The LGBT Healthy Living Centre (known as LGBT Health and Wellbeing) is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland 246290. Registered Office: 4 Duncan Place, Edinburgh, EH6 8HW. Recognised as a charity by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, no. SC034216.

At its heart, ‘Queer Milk’ exists for the same reason as many of our other community groups: to ensure that people who may feel isolated or excluded have somewhere welcoming to find peer support and connection. It is therefore particularly dissapointing to see a group established to reduce isolation so widely mispresented.

We recognise that issues relating to sex, gender, and language can generate strong and differing views. However, we are concerned when public debate is based on innaccurate descriptions of our work or the services we provide. As an organisation, we remain committed to openness, evidence-informed practice, and ensuring that the communities we service have access to safe, appropriate support.

We are enormously grateful for your continued confidence in LGBT Health and Wellbeing and the role you play in helping us improve the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ people across Scotland.

If you have any questions about our work, the recent coverage, or the support that we provide, please do not hesitate to get in touch. I would be very happy to discuss this further with you and answer any questions that you may have.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Kelvin
CEO

E: mark@lgbthealth.org.uk
T: 07716 637 134 or 0131 564 3970

Ignore Block Delete Archive Report Reply Reply all Forward Meeting Recall message Resend message Share to Teams Copilot

Delete Report Respond Teams

Re: Queer Milk

Summarise this email

[redacted] Reply Reply all Forward

To: [redacted]

Cc: [redacted]

Thu 30/07/2026 4:38 PM

Hi [redacted]

Thank you for sending this letter. It's well put and perfect.

Kind regards

[redacted]

[redacted] | Assistant Programme Manager SHBBV | Public Health and Health Policy | NHS Lothian | Chalmers Centre

My normal working hours are Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.45am to 6.30pm, and Tuesdays 8.45am to 5.30pm. I don't work on Fridays.

From: [redacted]
Sent: 30 July 2026 1:54 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Queer Milk

Dear Steff,

Please see attached letter in response to recent media coverage of 'Queer Milk'.

Thanks,

[redacted]

CEO

LGBT Health and Wellbeing
Support Meetups Updates
admin@lgbthealth.org.uk
[redacted]

lgbthealth.org.uk



Progressing our work as an anti-racist organisation
Follow our journey

Ignore Block Delete Archive Report Reply Reply all Forward Meeting Recall message Resend message Share t Teams Copilot

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Fw: Queer Milk

Summarise this email

[redacted]

Reply Reply all Forward

To: [redacted]

Cc: Kerr, Yvonne

Tue 04/08/2026 2:30 PM

Queer Milk - Chalmers.pdf
317 KB

[redacted]
As discussed, here is the letter [redacted] shared.

This is hopefully the end of it. We don't fund the group, we won't be commenting and I'm not aware of any new media enquiries.

[redacted] and I mean to put our heads together to identify NHSL colleagues who we might call upon for any future related FOIs or media enquiries, eg endocrinology, midwifery, GIC? If any names come to mind please let us know? It's just to know in advance should these sorts of questions come up again.

Thanks
[redacted]

[redacted] | Assistant Programme Manager SHBBV | Public Health and Health Policy | NHS Lothian | Chalmers Centre

My normal working hours are Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.45am to 6.30pm, and Tuesdays 8.45am to 5.30pm. I don't work on Fridays.

From: [redacted]
Sent: 30 July 2026 1:59 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Queer Milk

Dear NHS Lothian and Chalmers colleagues,

Please see attached letter re media coverage of 'Queer Milk'. Always happy to discuss further if you would find that helpful.

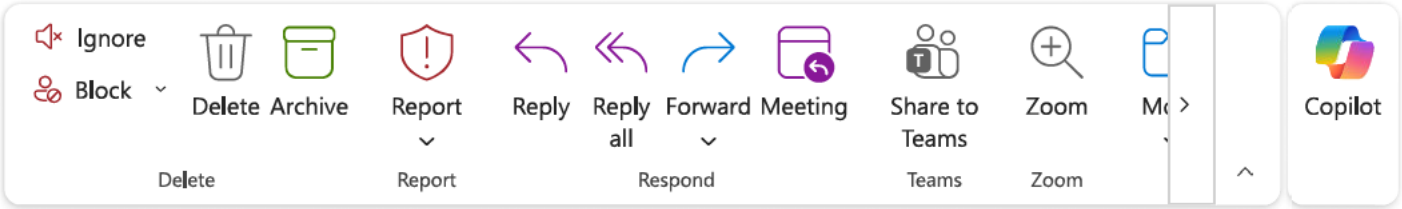
Thanks,

[redacted]

[redacted]
Pronouns: [redacted]
CEO

LGBT Health and Wellbeing
Support Meetups Updates
[redacted]

lgbthealth.org.uk



Re: FOI request - 11777

Summarise this email

[redacted]

Reply | Reply all | Forward

To: [redacted]

Cc: [redacted]

Fri 07/08/2026 4:30 PM

Fiona
Adam has responded that Chalmers do not have anything related to q2. So its a nil return from public health and Lothian Sexual and Reproductive Health Services
regards
[redacted]

[redacted] Consultant in Public Health

Stigma remains a serious challenge for many people living with HIV, particularly in health and social care settings hiv-informed.scot

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From: [redacted]
Sent: 05 August 2026 3:24 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Re: FOI request - 11777

Hi
I don't think Q4 is a question, I think it's poor formatting (from the sender) and is intended to be a follow-on from Q3. So we could reiterate the answer to Q3.

Re Q2. 'Copies of any risk assessments, clinical evidence reviews, child impact assessments, or safeguarding assessments carried out by or for NHS Lothian in relation to supporting or funding male lactation / chestfeeding for infant feeding'.

We don't fund anything in relation to this but I'm not aware if any NHSL departments have anything relevant to 'supporting' male lactation or chestfeeding. Should we check with endocrinology and/or midwifery? I don't have any relevant contacts, although it may be possible to get an endocrinology contact via the GIC if helpful?

Thanks
[redacted]

[redacted] Assistant Programme Manager SHBBV | Public Health and Health Policy | NHS Lothian | Chalmers Centre

My normal working hours are Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.45am to 6.30pm, and Tuesdays 8.45am to 5.30pm. I don't work on Fridays.

From: [redacted]
Sent: 05 August 2026 3:10 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: RE: FOI request - 11777

Hi

Ignore Block Delete Archive Report Reply Reply all Forward Meeting Share to Teams Zoom Copilot

Delete Report Respond Teams Zoom

RE: LGBT Health and Wellbeing

Summarise this email

[redacted]

Wed 05/08/2026 10:27 AM

Start reply with: You are very welcome! Happy to help! Always happy to help!

Many thanks, [redacted]

This is really helpful.

Bw

[redacted]

#hello my name is…

[redacted]

Executive Assistant to Susan Webb | Director of Public Health and Health Policy | NHS Lothian | Public Health and Health Policy | Waverley Court | 4E.Market Street |
Edinburgh | EH8 8BG

[redacted]

Our Values Into Action
Quality | Dignity and Respect | Care and Compassion | Openness, Honesty and Responsibility | Teamwork

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From: [redacted]
Sent: 05 August 2026 10:25
To: [redacted]
Subject: Re: LGBT Health and Wellbeing

Hi [redacted]

Yes, we have a contract with them for £158,500 per annum, the term ends 31st March 2027 but we already offered them the built-in 12 month extension to take us up to 31st March 2028. (This is to allow time for ongoing work ahead of any service recommissioning for April 2028.)

I can send details of the specification if required? I have responded to two recent FOIs and a media article concerning this organisation. In case it's relevant, I can confirm NHSL do not fund the 'Queer Milk' group that's been the subject of recent enquiries. Although our provision allows groups, the Queer Milk one is volunteer led and part of LGBT Health and Wellbeing's community group programme, so all they do is provide premises for the group to meet. Philip is well-versed on all this, but I'm also happy to answer any questions about this, or our broader funding spec, if helpful.

Thanks

[redacted] Assistant Programme Manager SHBBV | Public Health and Health Policy | NHS Lothian | Chalmers Centre

My normal working hours are Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.45am to 6.30pm, and Tuesdays 8.45am to 5.30pm. I don't work on Fridays

Outlook

Re: Queer milk support group funded by NHS Lothian

From [redacted]
Date Wed 29/07/2026 8:23 PM
To [redacted]
Cc [redacted]

Agree, good job [redacted] that you had to do it, but good job nevertheless. Useful too given the FOI that's come in about it...

[redacted] Why I share my pronouns

Strategic Programme Manager (Edinburgh)

From: [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, July 29, 2026 4:50 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: FW: Queer milk support group funded by NHS Lothian

Hi [redacted]

Thanks for your time today and for following up these various strands so promptly. Thanks to you, it looks like everyone who needs to be aware is now briefed on the necessary detail.
Thanks again for managing this and do get in touch if there's anything more it might be helpful to explore/discuss.
Best wishes,
[redacted]

From: [redacted] **On Behalf Of** Media, Lothian
Sent: 29 July 2026 16:47
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: RE: Queer milk support group funded by NHS Lothian

Hi [redacted]

Thanks for the update, that is really useful to know. I will share it with media colleagues.

I've seen the Times print article, which briefly mentioned the amount of NHS Lothian funding provides towards the end. I understand the online article went on to say*: 'NHS Lothian was asked whether it supported the practice of trans women breastfeeding babies. It declined to answer the question*

directly, but confirmed it funded LGBT Health and Wellbeing to provide a range of services. These include "specialist support services for transgender adults".

Both Susan Webb and Fiona Wilson were advised about this.

We also received an approach from GB news yesterday asking if we had anything more to add or clarify regarding the Times story. We confirmed that we provide funding for a range of services, including specialist support.

Best wishes
[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 29 July 2026 16:16
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Re: Queer milk support group funded by NHS Lothian

Hi [redacted]
I've seen the article in The Times and have spoken with LGBT Health and Wellbeing. I'm sending a brief update in case of further media enquiries on the back of the article (LGBT H&W were today approached by GB News):

- Queer Milk group is not in fact covered by NHS Lothian's funding to LGBT H&W. Although our funding has provision for groups, this group is part of a wider 'community group programme', where groups are suggested by the community and run by volunteers using space provided by LGBT H&W.
- The group is relatively new with very small attendance thus far.
- LGBT H&W hope to develop a short FAQs for their partners to address questions about the group that the article may bring up.

I assume the article was shared directly with you in the comms team, but do you know if it has been shared with Susan Webb and Fiona Wilson?

Kind regards
[redacted]

[redacted] Assistant Programme Manager SHBBV | Public Health and Health Policy | NHS Lothian | Chalmers Centre

My normal working hours are Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.45am to 6.30pm, and Tuesdays 8.45am to 5.30pm. I don't work on Fridays.

From: Ziarelli, Lynne <Lynne.Ziarelli@nhs.scot> on behalf of Media, Lothian <Lothian.Media@nhs.scot>
Sent: 27 July 2026 4:46 PM
To: Kaye, Steff <Steff.Kaye@nhs.scot>; Duncan-Rusk, Adam <Adam.Duncan-Rusk@nhs.scot>
Subject: RE: Queer milk support group funded by NHS Lothian

Thank you both

From: Kaye, Steff <Steff.Kaye@nhs.scot>
Sent: 27 July 2026 16:08
To: Duncan-Rusk, Adam <Adam.Duncan-Rusk@nhs.scot>; Media, Lothian <Lothian.Media@nhs.scot>
Subject: Re: Queer milk support group funded by NHS Lothian

Yes, I'm happy with this too. Thanks Lynne.
Steff

Steff Kaye (she/her) | Assistant Programme Manager SHBBV | Public Health and Health Policy | NHS Lothian | Chalmers Centre

My normal working hours are Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.45am to 6.30pm, and Tuesdays 8.45am to 5.30pm. I don't work on Fridays.

From: Duncan-Rusk, Adam <Adam.Duncan-Rusk@nhs.scot>
Sent: 27 July 2026 3:34 PM
To: Media, Lothian <Lothian.Media@nhs.scot>; Kaye, Steff <Steff.Kaye@nhs.scot>
Subject: Re: Queer milk support group funded by NHS Lothian

Happy with this. Thanks, Lynne.

From: Ziarelli, Lynne <Lynne.Ziarelli@nhs.scot> on behalf of Media, Lothian <Lothian.Media@nhs.scot>
Sent: Monday, July 27, 2026 2:37:34 pm
To: Duncan-Rusk, Adam <Adam.Duncan-Rusk@nhs.scot>; Kaye, Steff <Steff.Kaye@nhs.scot>
Subject: RE: Queer milk support group funded by NHS Lothian

Hi Adam and Steff

Thanks for getting back to me and confirming what the funding covers. We're planning to go back with a generic info only response as below, which we'll sign off with Fiona Wilson and Susan Webb.

Can you please let me know if you've got any comments?

NHS Lothian provides funding from Public Health for LGBT Health and Wellbeing to provide health and wellbeing services for LGBT+ people aged 16 and over in Lothian to support:

- A specialist telephone and online messaging advice and support service across a range of health and wellbeing issues including mental health, sexual wellbeing and support with finance/cost of living
- A specialist counselling service
- Specialist support services for transgender adults including advice on transitioning, one to one support, support to access services including the Chalmers Gender Identity Clinic and/or Sandyford Young People's service. This includes the delivery of group interventions to meet the differing needs/populations within the LGBT+ community
- Workforce development opportunities in Lothian to increase confidence and competence across mainstream services to deliver accessible and inclusive services for LGBT+ adults

In addition, LGBT Health and Wellbeing also receives funding from Lothian Sexual and Reproductive Health Services to support patients on the gender waiting list and the running of the trans and non-binary clinic.

Best wishes
Lynne

From: Duncan-Rusk, Adam <Adam.Duncan-Rusk@nhs.scot>
Sent: 27 July 2026 14:26
To: Media, Lothian <Lothian.Media@nhs.scot>
Subject: Re: Queer milk support group funded by NHS Lothian

Hi Lynne,

Thanks for getting in touch.

LGBT Health & Wellbeing receives funding from NHSL from two sources that I am aware of; Public Health and from LSRHS. The money from Public Health is part of the SHBBV work plan. From LSRHS, the money is specifically relating to the gender service and supporting patients on the gender waiting list and to support the running of the trans and non-binary clinic.

I am not aware of this group and have no awareness of how it is funded, I can only advise as to our funding and how it used.

Thanks,
Adam

From: Ziarelli, Lynne <Lynne.Ziarelli@nhs.scot> on behalf of Media, Lothian <Lothian.Media@nhs.scot>
Sent: 27 July 2026 13:28
To: Duncan-Rusk, Adam <Adam.Duncan-Rusk@nhs.scot>
Subject: FW: Queer milk support group funded by NHS Lothian

Hi Adam

Please see the media enquiry below. Steff Kaye in Public Health has confirmed that we provide some funding to LGBT health and wellbeing to cover a range of support, but was not specifically aware of the support group 'Queer Milk'.

She advised that ELHSCP also fund them for support to people on the gender clinic waiting list, and a small amount of funding towards supporting a trans and non-binary sexual health clinic. Are you able to provide any more information about what funding LSRHS provide and whether you are aware of this specific group?

Thanks
Lynne

From: Sanderson, Daniel <daniel.sanderson1@thetimes.co.uk>
Sent: 27 July 2026 11:43
To: Media, Lothian <Lothian.Media@nhs.scot>
Subject: Queer milk support group funded by NHS Lothian

Hi,

I am working on a story about this support group to help members of the LGBTQ+ community breastfeed babies, which is run by the charity LGBT Health and Wellbeing.

The group says it is for parents who are 'breastfeeding, chestfeeding or giving human milk to their baby'. It says it is open to 'all LGBTQ+ people no matter what your feeding journey looks like' making clear that it is open to trans women (biological men) who believe they can breastfeed babies.

This is a practice which is clearly controversial, given that a biological man could only produce milk as a result of taking hormones and other drugs, and there is a lack of evidence about safety/nutritional value (if any) to a baby. The campaign group Scottish Trans has also supported this.

NHS Lothian gave this charity £252,370 in 2024-25, according to your most recent accounts. Can I please get a statement on whether you approve of the practice of biological men breastfeeding babies, and if not, will this financial support be reviewed?

Can you please come back to me by 5pm today.

Thanks.

Dan.

--
Dan Sanderson
Scottish Political Editor, The Times and Sunday Times
07822 872596
@DSanderson_85

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"Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail"

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