

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 16 August 2023

Public Authority: NHS England
Address: PO Box 16738
Redditch
B97 9PT

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested information in relation to the NHS Sustainability Board. By the date of this notice NHS England had not issued a substantive response to this request.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that NHS England has breached section 10(1) of FOIA in that it failed to provide a valid response to the request within the statutory time frame of 20 working days.
3. The Commissioner requires NHS England to take the following step to ensure compliance with the legislation.
 - NHS England must provide a substantive response to the request in accordance with its obligations under FOIA.
4. NHS England must take this step within 35 calendar days of the date of this decision notice. Failure to comply may result in the Commissioner making written certification of this fact to the High Court pursuant to section 54 of FOIA and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

Request and response

5. On 14 February 2023, the complainant wrote to NHS England and requested information in the following terms:

"Could I please put a Freedom of Information request into the following:

- A list of members of the NHS Sustainability Board since its formation. If members have joined or left, could I please get the month/year of this.
- A list of all the times the NHS Sustainability Board has met since its formation. For each meeting, could I please get a list of attendees and minutes.
- A list of the times the NHS Sustainability Board has reported to NHSE/I's board since its formation and a link to each relevant report."

6. NHS England acknowledged the request on 16 February 2023. To date, a substantive response has not been issued.

Reasons for decision

7. Section 1(1) of FOIA states that:

"Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled –

(a) to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request, and

(b) if that is the case, to have that information communicated to him."

8. Section 10(1) of FOIA states that a public authority must respond to a request promptly and "not later than the twentieth working day following the date of receipt".

9. On 24 July 2023 the Commissioner wrote to NHS England, reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant's request within 10 working days.

10. Despite this intervention NHS England has failed to respond to the complainant.

11. From the evidence provided to the Commissioner in this case, it is clear that NHS England did not deal with the request for information in accordance with FOIA. The Commissioner finds that NHS England has breached section 10(1) by failing to respond to the request within 20

working days and it is now required to respond to the request in accordance with FOIA.

Right of appeal

12. Either party has the right to appeal against this decision notice to the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights). Information about the appeals process may be obtained from:

First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights)
GRC & GRP Tribunals,
PO Box 9300,
LEICESTER,
LE1 8DJ

Tel: 0203 936 8963

Fax: 0870 739 5836

Email: grc@justice.gov.uk

Website: www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber

13. If you wish to appeal against a decision notice, you can obtain information on how to appeal along with the relevant forms from the Information Tribunal website.
14. Any Notice of Appeal should be served on the Tribunal within 28 (calendar) days of the date on which this decision notice is sent.

Signed

Michael Lea
Team Manager
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF