

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 6 August 2021

Public Authority: NHS Commissioning Board (NHS England)

Address: Quarry House
Quarry Hill
Leeds
LS2 7UE

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested information from NHS England about a project for community-based National FGM Support Clinics and their funding.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that NHS England failed to respond to the request within 20 working days and has therefore breached section 10 of the FOIA.
3. The Commissioner requires NHS England to take the following steps to ensure compliance with the legislation.
 - Issue a substantive response to the request in accordance with its obligations under the FOIA.
4. NHS England must take these steps 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 the FOIA and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

Request and response

5. On 9 April 2021, the complainant wrote to NHS England and requested information in the following terms:

"This is a request under the Freedom of Information Act. I am looking for further information on the community-based National FGM Support Clinics that offer support services for women with female genital mutilation who are aged 18 or older and not pregnant when they seek support.

The scheme was a two-year pilot launched in 2019.

For further information, please see here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/national-fgmsupport-clinics/>

I hereby request the following information:

- Of the eight clinics launched across England, how many are still running?*
 - Which clinics are no longer running?*
 - Since the clinics were launched, how many women in total have used the services across England?*
 - Which clinic has seen the highest number of women use its services?*
 - Of the eight, which clinics have secured funding to continue running past the allocated two-year timescale?*
 - For the clinics continuing on, where is their funding coming from? And specifically how much is it?"*
6. The complainant wrote to NHS England for an update on their request on 1 June 2021 and 21 June 2021.
7. By the date of this notice, NHS England had not provided a substantive response to the request.

Scope of the case

8. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 9 July 2021 to complain about NHS England's failure to respond to the request.
9. The Commissioner contacted NHS England on 23 July 2021 reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to

the complainant within 10 working days. The correspondence was neither acknowledged nor responded to.

10. The Commissioner also contacted the complainant on 23 July 2021 to explain that NHS England had been given 10 working days from that date within which to provide a response to their request.
11. The scope of this notice and the following analysis is to consider whether NHS England has complied with section 10 of the FOIA.

Reasons for decision

12. Section 1(1) of the 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.*

13. Section 10(1) of the FOIA states that responses to requests made under the Act must be provided "*promptly and in any event not later than the twentieth working day following the date of receipt.*"
14. NHS England did not provide a substantive response to the request within 20 working days of receipt. Therefore, the Commissioner's decision is that NHS England has breached section 10 of the FOIA.

Right of appeal

15. 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

16. 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.
17. 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

Susan Duffy
Senior Case Officer
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF