

## **Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)**

### **Decision notice**

**Date:** 18 October 2021

**Public Authority:** The NHS Commissioning Board (NHS England)

**Address:** Quarry House  
Quarry Hill  
Leeds  
LS2 7UE

#### **Decision (including any steps ordered)**

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1. The complainant requested information from the NHS Commissioning Board ("NHS England") relating to the NIMS database. By the date of this notice, NHS England had not provided a substantive response to the request.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that NHS England has 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 Act and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

## Request and response

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5. On 16 July 2021, the complainant wrote to NHS South, Central and West Commissioning Support Unit (SWC) and requested information in the following terms:

*"Please can I request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act regarding the NIMS database*

*1 Who has access to the information stored in this database? What criteria is applied when giving access? As per 1st Caldicott principle 'Justify the purpose'*

*2 How is access limited to only what is needed? As per 3rd principle 'use only the minimum amount needed'*

*3 How often is access audited? How do you audit? As per 4th principle 'strict need to know basis'*

*4 Who do you share the data from this database with and for what purpose? As per 8th principle 'inform service users of how their data is being used.'*

6. On 16 July 2021, SWC wrote to the complainant to inform them that their request had been passed on to NHS England to respond.
7. NHS England wrote to the complainant on 16 August 2021 to acknowledge the request.
8. On 2 September 2021, as the complainant had not received a response, they wrote to NHS England to ask for update on the status of their request.
9. By the date of this notice, NHS England had not provided the complainant with a substantive response to their request.

## Scope of the case

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10. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 9 September 2021 to complain about NHS England's failure to respond to their request.
11. The Commissioner contacted NHS England on 30 September 2021 reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant within 10 working days.

12. The Commissioner also contacted the complainant on 30 September 2021 to explain that NHS England had been given 10 working days from that date within which to provide a response to their request.
13. The complainant has provided evidence that they have received an acknowledgement from NHS England but, by the date of this notice, had not received a substantive response to their information request.
14. 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

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15. Section 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.*

16. Section 10 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.*"
17. 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

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18. 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](mailto:grc@justice.gov.uk)

Website: [www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber](http://www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber)

19. 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.
20. 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**