

Ref: 029FOI21.22 – Long Covid Clinics

Please could you provide answers to the following questions up to and including 1st May 2021. If this is not available, then please provide the answer up to the latest date that you have data for (but not beyond 1st May).

1. The number of referrals to long Covid clinics.
2. Average (mean) time taken from referral to first contact with the clinic for the latest two week period? Please provide this in working days.
3. The longest time taken from referral to first contact with the clinic.
4. Number of first contacts between long Covid clinic staff and patients.
5. The number of people waiting for a first appointment at a long Covid clinic in your region as of 1 May 2021.

Response

NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently working with regions and systems to develop and refine processes to collect activity and demographic data for the Post Covid syndrome Assessment clinics. From summer 2021, NHS Long Covid activity data on referral, number of assessments, waiting times and the onward patient journey will be published monthly. The information you have requested is therefore exempt under section 22(i) of the Freedom of Information Act as your request relates to information that is intended to be published in the future.

Exemption Information

Section 22(i) of the FOIA says that information is exempt if, at the time a public authority receives a request for it the public authority holds it with a view to publish it at a later date. As section 22 is subject to a public interest test, NHS Kirklees CCG has considered whether it would be in the public interest for us to provide you with the information ahead of publication, despite the exemption being applicable.

Arguments in favour of disclosure of the requested information:

- Disclosure of the requested information would be in line with a public authority being open and transparent and would help in promoting accountability.
- Disclosure would also be within the overall spirit of the Freedom of Information legislation in asking public bodies to be open and transparent.

Arguments in favour of engaging the exemption and withholding the requested information:

NHS England has already committed itself to publishing the requested information. Releasing information ahead of the planned publication date could lead to disruption of the communications plan and put duplicated or inaccurate information within the public domain. This would be misleading to those viewing the information.

Taking into account the deliberations above, it is felt that the public interest in engaging the exemption to withhold the information at this point in time outweighs the arguments towards disclosure. As a result, the requested information should not be provided, under section 22(i).