

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 17 March 2021

Public Authority: The NHS Commissioning Board

Address: Quarry House
Quarry Hill
Leeds
LS2 7EU

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested from the NHS Commissioning Board (NHS England) information relating to the employees within NHS England's and NHS Improvement's pharmacy teams. By the date of this notice NHS England had not provided a substantive response to this request.
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 Act and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

Request and response

5. On 10 December 2020, the complainant wrote to NHS England and requested information in the following terms:

"Under the Freedom of Information Act, I would like to request the following information related to pharmacy teams employed by NHSE&I.

I would prefer if the information is presented in an organisational chart and divided by teams and regions, including Job titles and Agenda for Change Bands. Please note I am only interested in jobs banded Band 8a and above.

Information required:

- 1. Ethnicity*
- 2. Gender*
- 3. Age (20-30; 31-40; 41-50; 51-60; 60+)*
- 4. Job title*
- 5. Agenda for Change Band (please include Very Senior Managers)*

I hope my request above is clear, but please let me know if you need any further clarification or if you need me to make any payment.

Also, please let me know if I need to contact the different regions in England to obtain the above information.

Finally, please send me the information electronically."

6. NHS England wrote to the complainant on 11 December 2020 to acknowledge the request.
7. On 11 January 2021, NHS England wrote to the complainant to provide her with an update on her information request.
8. On 26 January 2021 as the complainant had not received a response, she wrote to NHS England to ask for an update on the status of her request. By the date of this notice NHS England had not responded to the complainant.

Scope of the case

9. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 13 February 2021 to complain about NHS England's failure to respond to her request.
10. The Commissioner contacted NHS England on 25 February 2021 reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant within 10 working days.
11. The Commissioner also contacted the complainant on 25 February 2021 to explain that NHS England had been given 10 working days from that date within which to provide a response to their request.
12. The complainant has provided evidence that she has received an acknowledgement from NHS England but, by the date of this notice, had not received a substantive response to her information request.
13. 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

14. Section 10 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.*

15. The Commissioner considers that the request in question fulfilled the above criteria and therefore constituted a valid request for recorded information under the FOIA.
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

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: 0300 1234504

Fax: 0870 739 5836

Email: grc@justice.gov.uk

Website: 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

Ben Tomes
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