

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 18 January 2023

Public Authority: NHS England
Address: Quarry House
Quarry Hill
Leeds
LS2 7UE

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested information from NHS England about meetings held by the National Expert Group for tixagevimab/cilgavimab (Evusheld) pre exposure prophylaxis of Covid-19 and the Access and Policy National Expert Working Group for Neutralising Monoclonal Antibodies. 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 30 September 2022, the complainant wrote to NHS England and requested information in the following terms:

"I am given to understand that the following meetings took place;

1 The National Expert Group for tixagevimab/cilgavimab (Evusheld) pre exposure prophylaxis of Covid-19 on 19/5/ 2022 Chaired by [name redacted]

2 The National Expert Group for tixagevimab/cilgavimab (Evusheld) pre exposure prophylaxis of Covid-19 on 26/4/ 2022 Chaired by [name redacted]

3 The Access and Policy National Expert Working Group for Neutralising Monoclonal Antibodies on 10/11/2021 Chaired by [name redacted]

Please confirm the names, positions held of attendees and organisations involved in the above meetings.

Please provide the full minutes of the above meetings.

Any other documentation pertaining to the conclusions reached and actions resulting from these meetings."

6. NHS England acknowledged the request on 31 October 2022. To date, a substantive response has not been issued.

Scope of the case

7. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 6 December 2022 to complain about NHS England's failure to respond to their request.
8. The Commissioner has considered whether NHS England has complied with its obligations in relation to the time for compliance at section 10(1) of FOIA.

Reasons for decision

9. 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.”

10. 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".
11. On 15 December 2022, 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.
12. Despite this intervention NHS England has failed to respond to the complainant.
13. 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

14. 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

15. 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.
16. 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
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