



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

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By email

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Our ref: 21/03/nk/3089

12 April 2021

Dear Frank Lally

Re: Freedom of Information request - PCR advice to official UK testing centres

Thank you for your request received on 21 March 2021 addressed to Public Health England (PHE). In accordance with Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act), I can confirm that PHE partly holds the information you have specified.

Request

I have been given information from a number of Hospital Trusts in the UK that they have received advice from you regarding the procedures to use when conducting polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assays to detect Covid-19. Could you please send me a link to the document that you send to Trusts and other testing centres for this specific purpose.

PHE can confirm it does hold this information. However, the information is exempt under section 21 of the FOI Act because it is reasonably accessible by other means, and the terms of the exemption mean that we do not have to consider whether or not it would be in the public interest for you to have the information. However for your convenience we have included the following links:-

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/926410/Understanding_Cycle_Threshold_Ct_in_SARS-CoV-2_RT-PCR_.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879385/Guidance_for_Laboratories_offering_support_for_COVID-19_testing_for_publication_v2_2_.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/682533/Q4i5.pdf

Can you please confirm if any advice you give users indicates the specific cycle (Ct/Cq) values (or range) that they should use?

This is not a valid FOI request. Under section 8(1) of the FOIA, PHE is not required to provide explanations or opinions to answer your request.

Are you aware of any other official bodies that send out the information covered above to testing centres?

This is not a valid FOI request. Under section 8(1) of the FOIA, PHE is not required to provide explanations or opinions to answer your request.

If you have any queries regarding the information that has been supplied to you, please refer your query to me in writing in the first instance. If you remain dissatisfied and would like to request an internal review, then please contact us at the address above or by emailing foi@phe.gov.uk.

Please note that you have the right to an independent review by the Information Commissioner's Office if a complaint cannot be resolved through the PHE complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner's Office can be contacted by calling the ICO's helpline on 0303 123 1113, visiting the ICO's website at www.ico.org.uk or writing to the ICO at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely
FOI Team