



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Freedom of Information Team
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0EU

www.gov.uk/dhsc

Mr Chris Richings

By email to: request-761169-48f0baaa@whatdotheyknow.com

21 January 2022

Dear Mr Richings,

Freedom of Information Request Reference FOI-1334363

Thank you for your request dated 30 May, in which you asked the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC):

“Dear Department of Health and Social Care,

Each manufacturer of the Covid PCR test will recommend a differing maximum amplification cycle number when determining the presence of SARS CoV-2, but a maximum of around 40 amplification cycles is typically recommended by test manufacturers.

Has the amplification cycle value changed over the past 15 months ?

Please tell me how many software updates have been sent to these PCR machines throughout the United Kingdom over the past 15 months?

Was the amplification cycle set point ever changed during any PCR lab equipment updates?

Yours faithfully,

Chris Richings”

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

DHSC does not hold the information you have requested.

Outside of the scope of this FOI and on a discretionary basis, you may find the below information useful, as each laboratory has their own Standard Operating Procedures:

A typical RT-PCR assay will have a maximum of 40 thermal cycles. The lower the Ct value the higher the quantity of viral genetic material in the sample (as an approximate proxy for viral load). Ct values obtained in this way are semi-quantitative and are able to distinguish between high and low viral load. Ct values cannot be directly compared between assays of different types – not all laboratories use the same assay, and some may use more than one. You may wish to review the published [general guidance](#) for health protection teams.

If you are not satisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to appeal by asking for an internal review. This should be sent to freedomofinformation@dhsc.gov.uk or to the address at the top of this letter and be submitted within two months of the date of this letter.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communication.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may complain directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have already appealed our original response and received our internal review decision. You should raise your concerns with the ICO within three months of your last meaningful contact with us.

The ICO can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow SK9 5AF

Website: <https://ico.org.uk/concerns>

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Team
freedomofinformation@dhsc.gov.uk