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**Ally Tibbitt**

By email:

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Date 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021  
Your Ref FOI-2021-000260  
Our Ref RM/FOI-2021-000260

Enquiries to Roddy Mitchell  
Email [nss.foi@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.foi@nhs.scot)

Dear Mr. Tibbitt,

### **Application for Decision by the Scottish Information Commissioner (202100991)**

I refer to our response provided to you in relation to your Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) request for internal review dated 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

As per communications to you by Mr. Colin MacFadyen, Freedom of Information Officer with the Scottish Information Commissioner, NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) would like to release the information that you requested in Question 2 of your request, i.e.

2. Details of the total amount that has been paid to each firm in relation to this service provision to date, and details of how much each firm, if known, may receive in the future.

NSS agreed with your arguments made to the Scottish Information Commissioner and no longer wishes to rely on section 25 of FOISA in this case. On reflection and in terms of openness and transparency NSS have considered our initial response and have now provided this spend information in the attached spreadsheet entitled (FOI-2021-000260 Release).

The services provided by both Ascensos and Barrhead Travel were used only by Test & Protect, whilst the NSS National Procurement team and Test & Protect both used Pursuit. National Procurement used Pursuit for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) helpline calls and relying on the publication of payments >£25,000 for Pursuit would have included both PPE and Test & Protect services for Pursuit.

Therefore, the exact spend for Barrhead Travel, Ascensos and Pursuit detailed in the attached spreadsheet is in relation to services provided to Test & Protect, and the figures for each of the contractors is only available up until 31st March 2021 as this is when the individual contracts ended.

It must be noted that the contracts and payments also cover contact centre services supporting vaccination as well as Test & Protect.

In response to our failures to provide you with a response within the legislative 20 working days set out under FOISA, and subsequently a further 20 working days for your request for internal review, I completely agrees that NSS failed in its obligations under FOISA.

In order to briefly explain the contributory factors around these failures the area of NSS that holds the information (National Contact Centre (NCC)) that you had requested were majorly involved in delivering the first tranche of the COVID-19 vaccination programme which coincided with an exceptionally busy



Chair Keith Redpath  
Chief Executive Colin Sinclair

*NHS National Services Scotland is the common name of the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service.*

time within the NCC. All operational management effort was being directed into rapidly responding to emerging requirements as new Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice was received and campaigns to drive vaccination uptake were accelerated.

In relation to the internal review this coincided with a resurgent wave of COVID-19 infections driving additional contact tracing demand. It also coincided with a time when NCC were being asked to plan for even higher case levels forecast for returns of schools after the summer, the removal of restrictions beyond level 0 for August/September 2021 and the need to develop streamlined and digital approaches to be deployed in advance of that wave. Management focus was on ensuring that the contact tracing system was made more resilient to cope through that wave.

During the lifetime of the request and resultant internal review the NCC were overwhelmed due to focussing on the exceptional and constantly evolving demand on their services in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, i.e. the Test & Protect programme which includes contact tracing, the COVID-19 vaccination programme, the national vaccine helpline offering advice and appointment bookings/registration/rescheduling and the preparations for the winter flu vaccination programme within Scotland.

NSS is acutely aware of our obligations in relation to FOISA and strive to meet these with every request we receive, however, on this occasion NSS/NCC struggled to search for and obtain the information being requested within the statutory timescales as all of the NCC resource was devoted to providing an essential portfolio of COVID-19 related services directly to the people of Scotland during an unprecedented time of pandemic coupled with a continual demand upon and the evolution of their service offering.

I hope that this response in some way explains our poor performance on this occasion, however if you require any further information in relation to this letter please do not hesitate in contacting me via the email address [nss.foi@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.foi@nhs.scot)

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roddy Mitchell', written in a cursive style.

Roddy Mitchell  
**Organisation Lead for Corporate Records & FOI**