

Head Office

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Our ref: CAS-248545-C4F4S3
Date: 06th October 2022

Dear Ms Vanpeene

Re: Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your request dated 19th September 2022 for information from NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) as stipulated below:

Dear NHS Blood and Transplant,
some donors received the following text from your services in december 2021 "your blood type is vital for our winter stock build. we've space for donors with no appointment at [insert name of given donor centre] donor centre this week, so do come if you can"
could you clarify the following:

- 1) what did your services mean by this message?
- 2) how did you expect donors to understand this message?
- 3) what actions did you intend for the donor to take when they received this message?
- 4) how many donors received this message from 14/12/2021 to 21/12/2021? and how many donor centers were concerned by this message at the same time?
- 5) how many donors received similar messages (broken down by donor centre and date of text message sent) between 01/06/2021 and 31/12/2021?
- 6) how were the donors to whom you sent this text selected?
were any of the following criteria used to select which donor to send this message to: blood type, age, sex, date of latest donation, donor's address, donor's place of last donation, donor registered favorite place of donation, other (please specify)
- 7) who/what department within NHSBT decided to send these messages? who/which entity approved the wording?
- 8) who/what team effectively sent those text?
- 9) was any equality impact assessment done to compare how this text would be understood and impact the average donor Vs donors with mobility issues, learning disability, neurodivergent donors, donors whose first language is not english, new donors, female donors? please provide a copy of any assessment (official or not) done.
- 10) how many donors mentioned receiving this text in december 2021 to your services (when coming to donate, when booking an appointment, in feedback/concerns/complaints)?
- 11) what communication if any was sent to blood donor centre staff regarding the texts sent to donors?
- 12) how did you expect your staff to react when a donor showed up without an appointment at a given donor centre as per text instruction?

Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 NHSBT is obliged to:

- Let you know whether we hold the information you have requested
- Provide you with the requested information, if held, (subject to any exemptions under the Act which may apply).

I can confirm that NHSBT holds some of the information you have requested.

1) The SMS message in question was sent to invite donors to give blood at a particular location without having a pre-booked appointment, during the week of the message send. This is a deviation from our normal process which requires pre-booking and was necessitated by a potential shortage of key blood types over the winter period with some venues advising they had capacity available to accommodate walk-ins (N.B. walk in appointments are not routinely planned or organised).

2) Please see answer to Q1. The intention was for donors to be able to donate without a pre-booked appointment during the week of the message send to meet the potential shortage of key blood types.

3) To attend a donation session at the venue stated in the SMS during the week of the message send.

4) No Messages were sent during the period specified.

5) No similar SMS messages were sent to donors during the period specified.

6) The selection was against all those donors who had been invited to attend a donor centre who were eligible to donate during the target week and didn't have a booked appointment. The blood group selection was based on the groups required at the time. The donor centres for selection were based on those that were able to accept donors without an appointment at the time of the message send.

7) It was a joint approval/ decision between the Donor Experience and Communications directorate and Blood Donation Operations, who staff our collection teams

8) The Direct Marketing team within the Donor Experience and Communications directorate

9) There was no formal equality impact assessment carried out on this specific campaign. Contacting donors with specific appeals via the SMS channel is a regular activity for NHSBT to support in meeting demands in blood donation.

10) NHSBT does not keep formal records of communication that covers donor conversation with staff on session. Due to the nature of our complaint handling system, it currently is not possible to track complaints related to specific SMS messages. However, there was no unusual spike in complaint activity related to SMS messages generally over this period.

11) The communication was agreed in advance with the BD Operations Leadership team. Local Management briefed the activity to those Donor Centres that were included in the activity.

12) The intention was that donors should be able to donate without a pre-booked appointment, so long as they attended the stated Donor Centre location within the week of the message send. NHSBT staff were aware of the SMS activity and the need for stock at the time of the message send.

If you are dissatisfied with the response to your request, you can ask for a review of the handling of your request for information. Details of the complaint procedure are below:

Any person who has requested information from NHSBT, which has been dealt with under the FOIA is entitled to make a complaint and request an internal review of the handling of their request if they are dissatisfied with the response they have received. If you would like us to conduct such a review, as per guidance from the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) please contact us within forty working days of this letter. Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Dan Jeffery
Deputy Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO)

And

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Head of Corporate Communications

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