

Freedom of Information request 408-18

Request

I am hoping to gain some information in regards to non-surgical treatments for Facial Nerve Palsy patients throughout the UK. It has become apparent that though some patients are able to access physical rehabilitation facial therapies on the NHS others are having to apply for funding on an individual basis. There also appear to be disparities in whether patients are offered referral to a specialist facial therapist or a physical therapist who may not be trained in facial therapy.

With this in mind I am asking all groups responsible for funding in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland via the Freedom of Information Act the following questions. Please could you provide answers for your geographical area?

1. Of those with facial nerve palsy who have not made a full or nearly full recovery at 12 weeks following onset, can you provide an estimate of the percentage of such patients who are referred for rehabilitation of persistent facial pain/discomfort and dysfunction?
2. If a patient with facial nerve palsy is routinely referred to secondary care for rehabilitation therapy, which hospital(s) and department(s) do you refer to?
3. If routinely referring a patient with facial nerve palsy for therapy, do you refer to a specialist facial therapist or to a local general physiotherapy team?
 - a. Do you have specific centres that you refer to? If so please indicate which ones.
 - b. What is the average cost of a course of physical rehabilitation therapy?
4. Does the decision making panel for individual funding requests differentiate between referral to a specialist facial therapist (i.e. with a postgraduate qualification) and a general physiotherapist or speech and language therapist?
5. Is specialist physiotherapy or facial therapy freely available to patients with facial nerve palsy or is it funded on an individual basis?
 - a. If not routinely funded, what is the reason?
6. How many individual funding requests have you received to access specialist physiotherapy or facial therapy in the last 12 months?
 - a. How many were agreed?
 - b. How many were declined?
 - c. If declined, on what basis were they declined?
7. Is Tropic Electrical Stimulation (TES) freely available to patients with facial nerve palsy or is it funded on an individual basis?
 - a. If routinely available, where do you refer patients to for TES?
 - b. What evidence do you use to support routine funding of TES?
 - c. If routinely available, what is the average cost of a course of TES?

The information you provide may be used to write a health journal article and also used for general reporting purposes by the charity Facial Palsy UK.

Response

Please note NHS Borders does not routinely refer patients with facial nerve palsy for rehabilitation therapy to Physiotherapy or Speech & Language Therapy (SLT).

1. This information is not routinely collected as the electronic systems do not support collation of data by diagnosis. Therefore this data may be held in a patient's notes but to extract this would require a manual trawl of all medical casenotes and the cost of extracting this data would exceed the limit set in the Fees Regulations of the FOI(S)A 2002, and we are not required to provide.

Under Section 15 of the FOI(S)A 2002 Duty to provide advice and assistance both Physiotherapy and SLT services have estimated that they have only seen <5 patients over the last few years.

2. NHS Borders do not routinely refer for this condition.
3. Not applicable.
4. This information is not held, therefore under Section 17 of the FOI(S)A 2002 this data is not available.
5. Referrals are seen by either MSK physiotherapists or neurological physiotherapist if referred by neurologist. Not separately funded. Referrals seen by SLT are seen by generalist therapists and this is not separately funded.
6. If a referral is accepted an individual funding request will not be required. No individual funding requests (ECRs) have been received by NHS Borders in the past 12 months.
7. Trophic Electrical Stimulation (TES) is not freely available to patients and would be funded on an individual basis through the Extra Contractual Referral process if approved.

If you are not satisfied with the way your request has been handled or the decision given, you may ask NHS Borders to review its actions and the decision. If you would like to request a review please apply in writing to, Freedom of Information Review, NHS Borders, Room 2EC3, Education Centre, Borders General Hospital, Melrose, TD6 9BS or foi.enquiries@borders.scot.nhs.uk.

The request for a review should include your name and address for correspondence, the request for information to which the request relates and the issue which you wish to be reviewed. Please state the reference number **408-18** on this request. Your request should be made within 40 working days from receipt of this letter.

If following this review, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you may appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner and request an investigation of your complaint. Your request to the Scottish Information Commissioner should be in writing (or other permanent form), stating your name and an address for correspondence. You should provide the details of the request and your reasons for dissatisfaction with both the original response by NHS Borders and your reasons for dissatisfaction with the outcome of the internal review. Your application for an investigation by the Scottish Information Commissioner must be made within six months of your receipt of the response with which you are dissatisfied. The address for the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner is, Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife.