



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

Wynne Jones
cj-editor@biggeesblog.cymru

09 September 2021

Dear Wynne Jones,

Freedom of Information Request Reference FOI-1353572

Thank you for your request dated 7 August, in which you asked the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC):

“Dear Team Members

Subject: C J 113: Covid 19 mass testing programme

Thank you for your letter dated 6 August under reference FOI - 1346623. A copy is attached hereto.

You refer to a document not received by your team. My records indicate that the document was attached to my letter to you dated 16 June. The email chain of correspondence is set out below with the document attached. The document provides details of an external peer review of the RT-PCR test to detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The review was undertaken by a highly respected group of 22 international virologists, microbiologists and related scientists. The review reveals 10 major scientific flaws at the molecular and methodological level and concludes that the test should not be used for the diagnosis of viral infection. Supporting scientific evidence is provided in the document, as attached.

The review findings prompted my request for information on 16 June. I requested a copy of the scientific evidence available to UK Government confirming that the RT-PCR test can detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus and can be used to diagnose viral infection; i.e. evidence that conflicts with the review findings and justifies the continued use of the RT-PCR test as a diagnostic tool.

The Cabinet Office previously confirmed that they do not hold the information and redirected me to the D H S C; hence my request for information dated 16 June.

I hope this helps to clarify the position. If you require additional information or further clarification you are welcome to contact me at any time. Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Wynne Jones”

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

The article in question is an on-line only publication describing one of the first SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR assays. Commenting on this is out of scope of the FOIA.

DHSC holds the information you have requested.

Regarding RT-PCR tests in the UK: Only CE marked and MHRA approved kits are in use. These have undergone rigorous validation and verification prior to their use in the program as is required by the International standard ISO15189. However, as the information held by the Department on this process is already in the public domain, we will under Section 21 of the FOIA (information accessible to the applicant by other means), refer you to the published source where the process is outlined <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-and-procurement-of-coronavirus-covid-19-tests>.

Under Section 21 of the FOIA (information accessible to the applicant by other means), we refer you to the published validation reports of individual tests assessed by DHSC, which is available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-serology-and-viral-detection-tests-technical-validation-reports>.

All assays are controlled through the use of independently sourced quality standards and the individual laboratories all participate in independent External Quality Assurance schemes. PHE has also undertaken rapid assessments of commercially provided diagnostic tests for SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid detection. Under Section 21 of the FOIA (information accessible to the applicant by other means), please refer to the published source for more information <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-phe-laboratory-assessments-of-molecular-tests>

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 submitted within two months of the date of this letter and sent to FreedomOfInformation@dhsc.gov.uk, or to the address at the top 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
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

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

Yours sincerely,

Le-Anne Frankson
Freedom of Information Officer
FreedomOfInformation@dhsc.gov.uk