

Date: 12 March 2026  
Our ref: K: FOI/Ref: 2026-3277  
Email: [NSS.DevServicesFOI@nhs.scot](mailto:NSS.DevServicesFOI@nhs.scot)

Dear [REDACTED]

**Freedom of Information Reference: FOI-2026-3277 Surgical Skin Markers.**

I refer to your freedom of information request that we received on 13 February 2026 requesting the following information.

**I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.**

**I am interested in the types and colours of surgical skin markers used within your organisation, and how procurement or clinical guidance decisions are made about their use.**

**Please provide the following information:**

**1. A list of all surgical skin markers currently used in your organisation for:**

- Pre-operative site marking in theatres.
- Marking the skin for bedside or ward-based procedures (e.g., central venous access, chest drains, skin demarcation, or similar).

**2. For each marker, please include:**

- Brand and product name.
- Ink colour(s).
- Typical clinical area(s) where it is used.

**3. Copies of any product specifications, catalogues, or procurement documents held by the organisation that describe available colours and intended use.**

**4. Copies of any current Organisational policies, protocols, guidelines, or training materials that:**

- Refer to the choice of surgical skin marker colour.
- Refer to visibility of markings in different clinical contexts or patient groups.
- Address this issue within equality, diversity and inclusion, patient safety, or clinical governance documents.

**5. Information on whether any additional or alternative marker colours (beyond standard ones) are available within the organisation (e.g., for use in clinical areas or patient groups where standard markings may be less visible).**

**6. Anonymised, aggregated incident reports, risk assessments, or patient safety reports (1 January 2019 to present) where visibility of skin markings was identified as a contributory factor. (No patient-identifiable information is requested.)**

**If any part of this request is unclear, please contact me for clarification.**



Chair Keith Redpath  
Chief Executive Mary Morgan

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Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service*

**I would be grateful to receive the information electronically by email. Please advise me in advance of any fees, and do not process the request or assume consent without my prior agreement.**

We have now completed the search of our records and can provide you with the following information:

**1. A list of all surgical skin markers currently used in your organisation for:**

- **Pre-operative site marking in theatres.**
- **Marking the skin for bedside or ward-based procedures (e.g., central venous access, chest drains, skin demarcation, or similar).**

Under Section 17 of the Freedom of information Scotland Act, 2002 (FOISA) an organisation does not have to provide that information if it does not hold it. NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) does not hold any information relating to surgical skin markers that are currently used in our organisation for pre-operative site marking in theatres or marking the skin for bedside or ward-based procedures. For clarity NSS National Distribution Service (NDS) is NHS Scotland's central logistics operation that stocks and delivers essential medical supplies to hospitals and health facilities across the country. The stock products held are advised by Health Boards (HBs) therefore the responsibility of correct application of the products lies within the remit of the HBs. You may wish to contact the HBs detailed below as they may be able to provide more information.

**2. For each marker, please include:**

- **Brand and product name.**
- **Ink colour(s).**
- **Typical clinical area(s) where it is used.**

Under Section 17 of FOISA, an organisation does not have to provide any information that they do not hold. NHS NSS does not hold the information relating to ink colour or the typical clinical area of use as this would be held at HB level. You may wish to contact the HBs detailed below as they may be able to provide more information. What we can provide you with is Appendix 1 – NDS Stock, which is a list of all surgical skin markers, including the brand, which are held or were previously held for the period 01 January 2019 to date by the NDS.

**3. Copies of any product specifications, catalogues, or procurement documents held by the organisation that describe available colours and intended use.**

Under Section 17 of FOISA, an organisation does not have to provide any information that they do not hold. NHS NSS does not hold any product specifications, catalogues, or procurement documents that describe available colours and intended use. You may wish to contact the HBs detailed below as they may be able to provide more information.

**4. Copies of any current Organisational policies, protocols, guidelines, or training materials that:**

- **Refer to the choice of surgical skin marker colour.**
- **Refer to visibility of markings in different clinical contexts or patient groups.**
- **Address this issue within equality, diversity and inclusion, patient safety, or clinical governance documents.**



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Under Section 17 of FOISA, an organisation does not have to provide any information that they do not hold. NHS NSS does not hold any Organisational policies, protocols, guidelines, or training materials that refer to the choice of surgical skin marker colour, refer to visibility of markings in different clinical contexts or patient groups or that addresses this issue within equality, diversity and inclusion, patient safety, or clinical governance documents. You may wish to contact the HBs detailed below as they may be able to provide more information.

**5. Information on whether any additional or alternative marker colours (beyond standard ones) are available within the organisation (e.g., for use in clinical areas or patient groups where standard markings may be less visible).**

Under Section 17 of FOISA, an organisation does not have to provide any information that they do not hold. NHS NSS does not hold any information on whether any additional or alternative marker colours (beyond standard ones) are available within the area of use as the HBs may procure surgical skin markers out with the NDS. You may wish to contact the HBs detailed below as they may be able to provide more information.

**6. Anonymised, aggregated incident reports, risk assessments, or patient safety reports (1 January 2019 to present) where visibility of skin markings was identified as a contributory factor. (No patient-identifiable information is requested.)**

Please find attached Appendix 2 – Skin Marker Complaints, for information relating to complaints received where visibility of skin markings was identified as a contributory factor. Under Section 17 of FOISA, an organisation does not have to provide any information that they do not hold. NHS NSS does not hold any information on risk assessments relating to visibility of skin markings. This information would be held at HB level.

Health Board contacts as follows:

NHS Ayrshire & Arran - [foi@aaaht.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:foi@aaaht.scot.nhs.uk)

NHS Borders - [foi.enquiries@borders.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:foi.enquiries@borders.scot.nhs.uk)

NHS Dumfries & Galloway - [dg.feedback2@nhs.scot](mailto:dg.feedback2@nhs.scot)

NHS Fife - [fife.foirequestfife@nhs.scot](mailto:fife.foirequestfife@nhs.scot)

NHS Forth Valley - [fv.freedomofinformation@nhs.scot](mailto:fv.freedomofinformation@nhs.scot)

NHS Grampian - [gram.foi@nhs.scot](mailto:gram.foi@nhs.scot)

NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde - [foi@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:foi@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)

NHS Highland - [nhsh.foirequestshighland@nhs.scot](mailto:nhsh.foirequestshighland@nhs.scot)

NHS Lanarkshire - [foi@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:foi@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)

NHS Lothian - [foi@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:foi@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk)

NHS Orkney - [ORK.FORequests@nhs.scot](mailto:ORK.FORequests@nhs.scot)



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NHS Shetland - [shet.foi@nhs.scot](mailto:shet.foi@nhs.scot)

NHS Tayside - [tay.informationgovernance@nhs.scot](mailto:tay.informationgovernance@nhs.scot)

NHS Western Isles - [wi.foi-requests@nhs.scot](mailto:wi.foi-requests@nhs.scot)

Healthcare Improvement Scotland - [His.foi@nhs.scot](mailto:His.foi@nhs.scot)

NHS 24 - [FOI@nhs24.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:FOI@nhs24.scot.nhs.uk)

NHS Education for Scotland - [nes.foi@nhs.scot](mailto:nes.foi@nhs.scot)

NHS Golden Jubilee - [FOI@gjnh.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:FOI@gjnh.scot.nhs.uk)

Public Health Scotland - [Phs.foi@phs.scot](mailto:Phs.foi@phs.scot)

Scottish Ambulance Service - [sas.dataprotection@nhs.scot](mailto:sas.dataprotection@nhs.scot)

The State Hospital - [TSH.FOI-Mailbox@nhs.scot](mailto:TSH.FOI-Mailbox@nhs.scot)

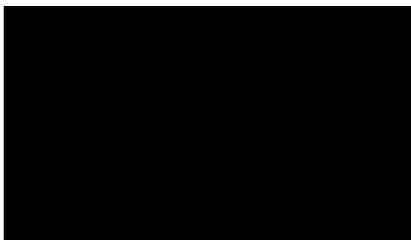
I trust you will find the information of assistance and if you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

If you are unhappy with any aspect of how we have dealt with your request, you can make representations to us asking us to review the handling of your request. Please write to the Associate Director Governance and Board Services (Board Secretary) at the email address [nss.foi@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.foi@nhs.scot) within 40 working days of the date of this correspondence.

If after a review you are still unhappy, you also have the right to apply to the Scottish Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at Kinburn Castle, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9DS, or via their [online application form](#).

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me at the above address.

Yours sincerely,



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Chief Executive        Mary Morgan

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