

[REDACTED]
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Date 13 April 2026
Your Ref
Our Ref 2026-04-13-FOI3321

Enquiries to nss.foi@nhs.scot

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information Reference: 3321 regarding the Breast Screening Service in Scotland

I refer to your request under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) for information in relation to the following and confirm that NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) does hold the information you have requested and now have pleasure in enclosing the following information:

According to this NHS Inform page - [Breast screening in Scotland | NHS inform](#) - a woman undergoing a mammogram as part of the national screening programme will:
"receive 1 of 3 results:

- normal result
- positive result
- inconclusive result

1. **What criteria were applied in 2020 and 2023 and are applied now by the reporting radiologist to determine whether results are classified as normal, positive or inconclusive?** The criteria has not changed over this period. [Guidance on screening and symptomatic breast imaging, fifth edition | The Royal College of Radiologists](#) Reporting image readers are trained in image reporting with two reporters reviewing all breast screening images. Where there is discordance of result, the images are arbitrated by a third reporter to make a definitive decision whether a woman is recalled to an assessment clinic or returned to routine screening.

Normal result = the breast x-rays taken at the screening examination were satisfactory and no evidence of breast cancer was found

Inconclusive result = This is called a technical recall and the initial screening mammograms are not clear or of a good enough quality. This may be due to blurring, all the breast not captured, movement or other technical issue and another screening appointment is arranged for the client to have further X-rays.

Positive result = the participant is asked to attend the breast screening clinic for further tests to complete their screening (second stage of screening), as an area on the breast x-rays has been identified that requires further review. On attendance at the clinic the participant may have a breast examination; more mammograms; an ultrasound scan or a

biopsy carried out for testing. The results of these tests can lead to a breast cancer diagnosis.

Participants who test positive for breast cancer, are referred to a hospital team of breast cancer specialists for treatment. Of the 4 out of 100 people who need further tests, only 1 will be diagnosed with breast cancer.

2. What national or professional guidance/criteria did/does the reporting radiologist refer to when making their determination? [Guidance on screening and symptomatic breast imaging, fifth edition | The Royal College of Radiologists](#)
[Professional Guidelines - British Society of Breast Radiology \(BSBR\)](#)
[Breast screening: professional guidance - GOV.UK](#)

3. If a patient were found to have "indeterminate calcification" on their first mammogram (age 50-53) undertaken during the screening process in September 2020, would this result in a normal, positive or inconclusive report?

Positive screening result—the client would be recalled for further review at a screening assessment clinic.

4. If a patient were found to have "indeterminate calcification" on their second mammogram (age 53-56) undertaken during the screening process in July 2023, would this result in a normal, positive or inconclusive report?

Positive screening result—the client would be recalled for further review at a screening assessment clinic.

5. If a patient had received a "positive" result in either September 2020 and/or July 2023, what would then happen have happened?

- i. If a screening participant has a “positive” screening result, they are invited for further assessment (as outlined in Q.1). If it is reported that there are **no signs of breast cancer**, the individual will be recalled for screening in 3 years’ time, if they meet the eligible criteria.
- ii. If a screening participant has a “positive” screening result, they are invited for further assessment (as outlined in Q.1). If the further diagnostic tests show a **diagnosis of breast cancer** they are referred to the specialist breast team who will oversee their treatment. An individual diagnosed with breast cancer; will remain on the screening system to ensure they continue to be recalled for screening every three years. If an individual who has been diagnosed, is still receiving hospital follow-up at the time of invitation, they are asked to contact the screening centre to cancel the screening appointment.
- iii. If a screening participant has a “positive” screening result, attends screening for further assessment and **is indeterminate for breast cancer but needs further surgical input**, they are referred to hospital for treatment. If further tests are benign, the individual will be discharged and will be recalled for screening in three years’ time, if they meet the eligible criteria.

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 & Board Services using the email address 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 Appeal form.

Yours sincerely,