

14 December 2021

Chris Johnston

By email: [fyi-request-17598-772fa756@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-17598-772fa756@requests.fyi.org.nz)  
Ref: H202116351

Tēnā koe Chris

### **Response to your request for official information**

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 16 November 2021 for:

*“... all records on the advice, instructions or policy the Ministry of Health provides directly or indirectly to people (hereafter referred to as "patients") that:*

- a) Have had a positive test for COVID19 and*
- b) Are required or advised to isolate at home (eg until well or needing hospital admission).*

*For guidance, this request includes (in the context of the above) any of the following:*

- 1) Standard (eg brochures, policy papers, regulations) advice, instructions, or policy given to communicated to patients - i.e. individual communications to patients is excluded.*
- 2) Any advice, instructions or policy given to District Health Boards (DHBs)/medical professionals about what medical advice or care that they should or should not provide to patients*
- 3) Policy about medical advice, or advice/instructions that are directive in nature and may affect the advice/instructions of the local medical professional or the actions of the patient.*
- 4) Both "what to do" and "what not to do" - positive and negative*
- 5) Drugs (prescription or over the counter), fluids, physical activity etc that might be policy or mentioned (in a positive or negative advice or instruction).*
- 6) Since 1 Oct 2020 inclusive.*
- 7) Communications received by the MoH on what to communicate to patients, or DHBs.*
- 8) How to count or record events - eg definitions for reporting qualitatively or quantitatively*

*This request excludes:*

- i) Individual communications to patients*
- ii) Advice given by the patient's GP or local medical professional or DHB to the patient*
- iii) Any internal DHB communication”*

Please note that patients who are isolating in the community are initially assessed and supported by their local public health unit (PHU) or regional COVID-19 coordination hub. The local providers are responsible for providing instructions and advice which is specific to each patient's individual situation and needs.

Further information and contact details of PHUs can be found at the following links:

- [www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/key-health-sector-organisations-and-people/public-health-units](http://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/key-health-sector-organisations-and-people/public-health-units).
- [www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/key-health-sector-organisations-and-people/public-health-units/public-health-unit-contacts](http://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/key-health-sector-organisations-and-people/public-health-units/public-health-unit-contacts).

The Ministry publishes information for COVID-19 cases isolating in the community at the following links:

- [www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-advice-cases](http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-advice-cases).
- [www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-self-isolation-managed-isolation-quarantine](http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-self-isolation-managed-isolation-quarantine).
- [www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources](http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources).

Additionally, the Ministry contributed to the advice provided at: [www.covid19.govt.nz/isolation-and-care/if-you-test-positive-for-covid-19/](http://www.covid19.govt.nz/isolation-and-care/if-you-test-positive-for-covid-19/).

The Ministry has also published public health advice on COVID-19 at:

- [www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus](http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus).
- [www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public](http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public).
- [www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-specific-audiences](http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-specific-audiences).

Furthermore, the Ministry has provided direct guidance to district health boards (DHBs) and health professionals. The COVID-19 Care in the Community framework provides organisers and providers with key guidance from the Ministry on caring for cases who are isolating in the community. This is published at: [www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-health-professionals/caring-people-covid-19-community](http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-health-professionals/caring-people-covid-19-community).

The Ministry also publishes information for health professionals at: [www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-health-professionals/covid-19-advice-all-health-professionals](http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-health-professionals/covid-19-advice-all-health-professionals).

Additionally, all general practitioners (GPs) have access to their local HealthPathways platform which provides clear pathways for clinical and general management for COVID-19 cases, as well as advice for the management of contacts. The clinical content has been approved by the Ministry, allowing for regional adaptation to provide information that is locality specific. This may include developing locally produced, DHB-approved patient information brochures and documents.

HealthPathways includes links for information providers may give to patients in addition to those available on the Ministry of Health and Unite Against COVID-19 websites:

- [www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/p/pulse-oximeter-adult/](http://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/p/pulse-oximeter-adult/)
- [www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/c/covid-19-positive-care-at-home/](http://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/c/covid-19-positive-care-at-home/)
- [www.healthnavigator.org.nz/medicines/b/budesonide-inhaler/a](http://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/medicines/b/budesonide-inhaler/a)
- [www.depression.org.nz/covid-19/covid-19/](http://www.depression.org.nz/covid-19/covid-19/)
- [www.justathought.co.nz/covid19](http://www.justathought.co.nz/covid19)
- [www.mentalhealth.org.nz/getting-through-together](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/getting-through-together)

Additional documents in scope of your request that healthcare providers can access via HealthPathways are attached in Appendix 1 and have been released to you in full.

On 6 December 2021, the Ministry contacted you to clarify what information you were seeking regarding parts 7 and 8 of your request. You clarified as follows:

*Part 7*

*For example a Minister or staff member of their office may have requested that a communication be initiated, and/or provide direction/scope/specify theme/review/feedback on what might be communicated.*

*The MoH may have also received advice from other entities on the messages and guidance to be communicated - Eg Pharmac, a university academic, or even police/justice.*

Please note that the Ministry does not have an easily accessible method of undergoing email searches. This would require the Ministry to manually search a substantial amount of information in an attempt to locate any information in scope of your request. As such part 7 of your request is refused under section 18(f) as providing you with this information would require substantial research and collation. I have considered whether levying a charge or extending the time to compile the information would enable the Ministry to respond, however, as each piece of correspondence would have to be individually reviewed, I do not believe it is in the public interest to do so.

*Part 8*

*An event is a person with COVID in the primary care setting (Eg their home). there is presumably a data dictionary of definitions that is relevant, or guidance to GPs or other local professionals that defines how they are to record aspects of these events over the course of their treatment or recovery. Eg what is the length of time defined as - from date of test or date of assessed first exposure or date of staying at home?... until when (last neg test date or date released).*

*There will be other aspects of the health record or how national statistics are counted though. I am looking for the definitions of how any statistics from this area are to be interpreted given the instructions at the point of data collection (or calculation/aggregation).*

Under section 12(2) of the Act, requests for information must be made with due particularity. As your request is currently worded, the Ministry is unable to provide a response to your request as this may include any number of COVID-19 related events. Where events are referenced in documents, they will typically provide definitions of any events and you are welcome to request clarification of any of these where a definition is not provided.

Regarding the example provided in your clarification, I can advise that GPs are provided with guidance on the definition of "Day Zero" for the purpose of record-keeping and management planning via the HealthPathways forum. If the patient is symptomatic, Day 0 is the date when the case first started showing symptoms. If the patient is asymptomatic, Day 0 is the date on which they were tested (and subsequently returned a positive test).

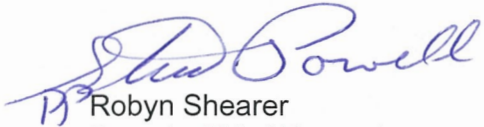
A patient is generally considered "recovered" when at least 10 days have passed since their symptoms started (14 days if they are not fully vaccinated), they have been symptom-free for 72 hours, and they have been cleared by the health professional responsible for their care. This information is available at: [www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/about-covid-19](http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/about-covid-19).

The Ministry remains willing and able to answer any requests you may have regarding specific definitions.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: [www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests](http://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests).

Nāku noa, nā



Robyn Shearer  
**Deputy Chief Executive**  
**Sector Support and Infrastructure**

## Appendix 1: Documents for release

#	Date	Title	Decision on release
1	N/A	COVID-19 Home Monitoring Program: Timed Position Changes Instructions	Released in full.
2	N/A	Timeline of COVID-19 Symptoms	
3	March 2020	Shared goals of care plan	