



Ministry
of Defence

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24 September 2020

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 03 September in which you requested the following information:

Following the HM SENIOR Coroner PFDR dated 6 Dec 2019 and the Defence Secretary's reply dated 30 Jan 2020:

- 1. How many blood tests have been carried out for junior soldiers as part of the recruitment process to date?*
- 2. Does the blood test only test for sickle cell or are other conditions also tested, if so what are they?*
- 3. What is the cost per recruit of conducting the blood tests?*
- 4. Are the results of the newborn blood test conducted at birth, held in a junior soldier candidates GP medical records, routinely checked for a positive or negative result before the decision is taken that the candidate's heritage requires a blood test for sickle cell at cost to the army?*
- 5. If the newborn blood test results are negative for sickle cell, why does the army not accept this medical evidence and insist on a duplicate blood test delaying the recruitment process and incurring costs?*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence I have addresses each question separately below;

1. We are unable to identify Junior Soldiers specifically within the cost/time restrictions of the FOI act, I can confirm that a total of 601 test have been carried out during 01 December 2019 – 23 September 2020.
2. All tests carried out between December 19 and March 2020 were conducted by the NHS at Frimley Park Hospital and looked solely for sickle cell trait (SCT). Tests carried out from July 2020 onwards are provided by a private contractor, the test is not sufficiently narrow to identify SCT specifically. Therefore, it may reveal other red blood cell abnormalities and thalassemys. We do not deliberately seek to know if there are other abnormalities, but should the test reveal other findings Recruiting Group would then be duty bound to inform the candidate of the details to ensure

they were aware.

3. The current cost for the test alone is £115.
4. All healthcare records provided are checked for previous SCT tests. If there is confirmation within a candidates record they have been tested for SCT (and received a negative result) no further test is required.
5. As per question 4, the Army does not require a further test if confirmation is provided of a negative test result for SCT.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance. Following this, if you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

L Williams

Manning Team, Army Secretariat