



10 December 2024

**Our Ref:** FOI 341

Dear

**Freedom of Information Act 2000  
Information in relation to Doctor Recruitment**

I am writing to confirm that the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (the Trust) has now completed its search for information relating to above which you requested on 7 November 2024. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your request. Thank you for your understanding and forbearance.

A response to each of the questions raised has been provided by the Finance & Estates Directorate and is attached in Appendix A.

If you are unhappy as to how this request has been handled, you have the right to seek a review within the Trust in the first instance. You should write to the Information Governance Department, Lough House, Ards Community Hospital ([informationgovernance@setrust.hscni.net](mailto:informationgovernance@setrust.hscni.net)) within two months of the date of this response and your complaint will be considered and a response provided, within 20 working days of receipt.

If, after receiving a response, you remain unhappy, you can refer your complaint to the Information Commissioner at The Information Commissioner's Office –Northern Ireland, 3rd Floor, 14 Cromac Place, Belfast, BT7 2JB. It is important to note that if you refer any matter to the Information Commissioner, you will need to show evidence of having gone through the Trust's internal review procedure to try to resolve the matter with the Trust in the first instance.

If you have any queries about this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

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**Rebecca Manning**  
**Information Governance Officer**

**Q1. Please confirm how many Temporary Doctors jobs were filled by agencies and provide a breakdown of the specialty and grade between June 2024 and October 2024.**

A1. The Trust use agency (locum) doctors to fill gaps in rotas due to vacancies, sickness etc and it is these individual assignments of varying lengths which will be put out to agencies to fill, rather than specific jobs. It is therefore not possible to provide a breakdown of Doctors jobs filled by agency, broken down by specialty and grade.

During the time period June 2024 to October 2024 1,902 assignments were sent to external agencies to be filled and the fill rate for those assignments was 97.7 %.

**Q2. Please confirm your agency spend for Temporary Doctors between June 2024 and October 2024. Can this be broken down by grade and specialty?**

A2. Please see Attachment 1 – Expenditure on Medical Locums

**Q3. Please confirm how many agency Temporary Doctor jobs were filled by off-framework agencies, and the spend attached to this.**

A3. As per the response to question 1 the Trust cannot provide a breakdown of Doctors jobs filled by off-framework agencies, broken down by speciality and grade.

The Trust can confirm that the expenditure on medical agency costs from the period June 2024 to October 2024 for off-framework agencies was £1.9 million.

**Q4. Please can you confirm if a DE platform / PSL or tiered system is in place if so, please confirm the structure.**

A4. The Trust utilise the services of a third-party provider, to manage locum doctor requirements.

The third-party provider acts as the platform whereby external agencies provide medical locums. The Trust utilises the regional medical locum framework where possible.

**Q5. What is the DE to non-DE spend from June 2024 to October 2024?**

A5. 100% DE spend from June 2024 to October 2024.

**Q6. Does the Trust have a projected agency usage plan for the coming year, and are there specific goals for reducing agency dependency?**

A6. The Trust does not plan for the use of agency staffing, and is actively engaged in a number of ongoing initiatives to attempt to reduce agency spend, including specific financial targets, ongoing recruitment campaigns and scrutiny and oversight at a number of different levels across the organisation.

**Q7. Long-Term Cost-Reduction Strategy: Is there a long-term strategy in place to reduce agency doctor costs or transition to alternative staffing models?**

A7. The Trust's Agency Reduction Oversight Group (AROG), in conjunction with the regional Agency Reduction Implementation Group (ARIG) for Health & Social Care in Northern Ireland (HSCNI) has a number of ongoing work streams focused on different professional groupings, with the aim of reducing the systems' reliance on agency staffing and ensuring that the best value is obtained where agency spend is incurred.