



2 July 2025

Our Ref: FOI 1086

Dear

**Freedom of Information Act 2000
Information in relation to Trust Social Workers and Case Loads**

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 26 March 2025. 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 Office of the Medical Directorate and the Children's Services & Social Care 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) 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

Rebecca Manning
Information Governance Officer

Q1. On December 31st, of each year between 2018 and 2025 inclusive, what was the number of social workers in children's services in your trust?

A1. Please see Table 1 for the number of social workers in children's services on 31st December, each year between 2018 and 2025.

Table 1

Permanent & Temporary Social Workers in Children's Services Directorate Band 5c – 8c		
On 31st December	Headcount	WTE*
2018	412	378.28
2019	408	378.42
2020	435	404.07
2021	448	417.15
2022	448	417.24
2023	475	441.38
2024	485	447.80

*Whole Time Equivalent

Q2. On December 31st, of each year between 2018 and 2025 inclusive, what was the average caseload per social worker in child services?

A2. The information requested is not held on a central information system. To obtain this information would require a manual review of records.

This would exceed the 'Appropriate Limit' as defined by the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Trust therefore exempts the release of this information under Section 12(1).*

Q3. During each year 2018 - 2025 inclusive, how many complaints have been made against children's social workers in your trust?

A3. Please see Table 1 for the number of complaints made against children's social workers within the Trust from 2019 to 2025. Please be advised, due to the Trusts new data system, the Trust is unable to provide figures prior to April 2019.

Table 1

Financial Year	No. of Complaints
2019/2020	125
2020/2021	144
2021/2022	156

2022/2023	178
2023/2024	147
2024/2025	104

Q4. During each year 2018 - 2025 inclusive, how many of those complaints led to a formal investigation?

A4. The Trust is unable to provide the number of complaints which led to formal investigations as this information is not held on a central information system. To obtain this information would require a manual review of each complaint.

This would exceed the 'Appropriate Limit' as defined by the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Trust therefore exempts the release of this information under Section 12(1).

*12.-(1) Section 1(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 this statement acts as a Refusal Notice in respect of questions 2 & 4.

However, the Trust can confirm that in the event of a formal complaint being received by the Trust, it would be processed under the Trust's Complaints Handling Procedure.

Q5. During each year 2018 - 2025 inclusive, how many families have taken legal action against children's social services in your trust over allegations of wrongful removal?

A5. There have been no legal cases against the Trust Children's Social Services which relate to allegations of wrongful removal within the specified timeframe.

Q6. During each year 2018 - 2025 inclusive, how many social workers have been dismissed or disciplined due to misconduct?

A6. There were a total of 5 social workers dismissed or formally disciplined due to misconduct, within the Trust, between 2018 and 2025. Disciplinary cases relating to absence were not reviewed.

Please be advised, the Trust is unable to provide the requested information broken down by each year to avoid any risk of identification of individual staff members. As the figure is a low, for the specified time period, to break down these figures by year may identify individuals.