

13 October 2025

**Our Ref:** FOI 1404

Dear

**Freedom of Information Act 2000  
Information in Relation to Domiciliary Care**

I am writing to confirm that the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (the Trust) has now completed its search for information relating to the above, which you requested on 11 September 2025.

A response to the questions you have raised has been provided by the Finance and 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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**Olivia Robinson**  
**Information Governance Officer**

**Q1. *It seems that the private-funded market is very limited, with care being free at the point of delivery. There is reference to average rates of around £14.01–£16.00 per hour — do we know the specific rates paid by each HSC Trust within the proposed territory as given the averages, it would suggest each Trust has individual rates?***

A1. The rate paid for standard domiciliary care packages is currently £21.35 per hour in the Trust.

**Q2. *On Direct Payments, our feedback suggests many Clients directly employ their carers. Do we have data on the proportion using Direct Payments to purchase care through agencies, rather than employing individual Personal Assistants?***

A2. The Trust does not hold data relating to the proportion using Direct Payments to purchase care through agencies, rather than employing individual Personal Assistants.

**Q3. *Regarding short calls, is there any scope to negotiate with funding bodies in Northern Ireland (as we sometimes do in England) to secure minimum call lengths closer to our USP of 1 hour call durations?***

A3. There is no formal mechanism to negotiate minimum call lengths with funding bodies in Northern Ireland.

The Trust commissions care packages based on the assessed needs of individual service users, which determines the duration of each call.

While providers may highlight their preferred call durations during discussions, call lengths are ultimately set according to assessed need and cannot be negotiated.

**Q4. *Can you clarify how commissioning is structured across the HSC Trusts — e.g., spot purchase, preferred provider lists, or framework contracts?***

A4. The Trust commissions domiciliary care services primarily on a spot purchase basis.

Additionally, the Trust holds a number of contracts with approved providers, who are allocated packages of care in line with service user needs and provider capacity.

There is no overarching preferred provider list or framework agreements in operation.

**Q5. *And do frameworks require specific qualifying factors (such as having been inspected by RQIA) as we know that the methodology of RQIA is***

***not to award ratings, but statements on compliance), before a provider can join?***

A5. The Trust does not currently operate a specific framework arrangement.

However, providers wishing to enter into a contract with the Trust must meet a range of criteria including evidence of registration with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) for the relevant service type(s). Please note that RQIA inspections do not provide ratings but instead assess compliance against regulations and standards.

Additionally, the Trust requires evidence of at least one operational inspection (separate from the pre-registration RQIA inspection) before a provider can be considered for contracting.

***Q6. It is noted that complex and nursing care is tendered separately. Could you provide more detail on how this tendering process differs from standard domiciliary care?***

A6. Complex and nursing care is commissioned separately from standard domiciliary care in the Trust.

When a specialist package is required, the Trust issues an Expression of Interest (EOI) to providers already contracted with the Trust and holding the appropriate RQIA registration(s).

The EOI includes a profile that details the service user's assessed needs, required staffing levels, training requirements, and whether nursing/specific staff are required. Interested providers then submit a response, including proposed costs to deliver the service. Furthermore, responses are then evaluated and scored by the Trust to determine the successful provider.

Standard domiciliary care packages are allocated on an equitable basis via the Trust's Referral Hub, where contracted providers notify the Trust of their capacity within specified geographical areas, and packages are allocated accordingly.

***Q7. What specific regulatory considerations apply to complex care? It is noted that there is reference to restrictions (e.g., rehabilitation being NHS-led) — are there other examples, such as limitations on delegated health care tasks, that we should be aware of?***

A7. The only specific regulatory consideration that applies to complex care in the Trust is that the provider must be registered with the RQIA.

***Q8. Is there any intelligence on the average rates paid for complex/nurse-led care compared with standard domiciliary care?***

A8. The average rates paid for complex/nurse-led care in the Trust ranges from £24.07 per hour to £59.75 per hour.

This rate differs from the amount paid for standard domiciliary care packages in the Trust which is currently £21.35 per hour, as noted above.