



3 September 2025

Our Ref: FOI 1332

Dear

**Freedom of Information Act 2000
Information in relation to Medical Microbiology, Virology and Infectious
Disease**

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 5 August 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 Surgery & Elective, Maternity & Paediatric Services 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. Does your trust have dedicated virology laboratories, or are diagnostic tests for viral infections conducted in microbiology laboratories?

A1. No, the Trust does not have a dedicated Virology laboratory. The Microbiology laboratory conducts a limited repertoire of Virology tests. Additional Virology requests are conducted at a reference laboratory.

Q2. Do you provide clinical advice to more than 1 trust? If so, does that include onsite availability and how many trusts, hospitals, health boards, and organisations?

A2. No, the Trust does not provide clinical advice to other Trusts/Organisations.

Q3. Is your trust responsible and/or do they cover any other laboratory, if so, how many laboratories?

A3. No, the Trust is not responsible for or cover any other laboratory.

Q4. What type of lab setup does your organisation currently use?

A4. The Trust has a Microbiology Laboratory with various work sections as listed below:

- Special Investigations (Blood cultures & CSF analysis),
- Urine investigations (microscopy, culture and urinary antigens),
- Infection control samples,
- H. pylori faecal antigen testing,
- Respiratory samples (molecular and culture),
- Faecal samples (molecular and culture),
- General Bacteriology swab / tissue / fluid (microscopy and culture).

Q5. Approximately how many tests have you received yearly for swabs, blood, urine & stools in the last 5 years for MM, MVIR & ID?

A5. Please see Table 1 for an approximate, 5 year average number of tests.

Table 1

Category	No. of Tests (approximate average)
Swabs	38000 Per year
Urine	71000 Per year
Blood Cultures	11000 Per Year
Faeces	35000 Per year (includes regional H. pylori tested conducted within the Trust)

Q6. *As a medical microbiologist / medical virologist accredited in infectious diseases, do you provide inpatient care?*

A6. Medical microbiologists within the Trust provide clinical advice to clinical teams. Microbiologists do not have 'named consultant' responsibility and do not have a caseload of patients.

Q7. *How many of your working hours are spent between the listed work areas, per week?*

A7. An average of 66 hours per week including on-call.

Q8. *How many microbiologists also do virology workload?*

A8. No microbiologists also do virology workload.

Q9. *Does the service cover the listed out-of-hours (inpatient or other?)*

A9. The 24/7 service cover laboratory/microbiologist.