South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Information Governance

5 August 2025

Our Ref: FOI 1242

Dear

Freedom of Information Act 2000
Information in Relation to Conscientious Objection Query

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 16 June 2025. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your request. Thank you for your understanding and forbearance.

A response to the questions you have raised has been provided by the Surgery, Elective, Maternity and Paediatrics 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

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Olivia Robinson
Information Governance Officer

Lough House, Church Street, Newtownards, BT23 4AS
Tel: 028 91512210 Email: informationgovernance@setrust.hscni.net

Q1. The number of healthcare professionals in the South Eastern Trust who have formally declared a conscientious objection to participating in treatment authorised under The Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020, specifically Part 7 – Conscientious Objection.

A1. The Trust currently has 18 healthcare professionals who have declared a conscientious objection within gynaecology services.

Q2. Details of how the South Eastern Trust are managing conscientious objection, including any specific policies or procedures currently in place.

A2. Staff adhere to guidance provided by the regulating bodies: the General Medical Council (GMC), the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) as well as professional guidance. Please see below websites for GMC and NMC.

https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/conscientious-objection-by-nurses-and-midwives/

https://www.gmc-uk.org/professional-standards/the-professional-standards/personal-beliefs-and-medical-practice/personal-beliefs-and-medical-practice

Training on conscientious objection can be accessed through the Clinical Education Centre (CEC). In addition, the Trust is continuing to provide Value Clarification Workshops for staff.