

26 June 2017

Our Ref: RFI 20508

Dear

**Freedom of Information Act 2000
Mental Health Patients Absconding**

I am writing to confirm that the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (the Trust) has now completed its search for the information relating to the above which you requested on 30 May 2017.

A response to each of the questions raised has been provided by the Adult Services and Prison Healthcare Directorate and is attached in Appendix A.

Under the terms of the legislation, if you are unhappy with this response you have the right to seek a review within the Trust in the first instance. If you wish to do so, please write to me at the address below.

If after such a review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner who will undertake an independent review. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, SK9 5AF.

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

**L McAree (Miss)
Head of Information Governance &
Directorate Support**

Under the freedom of information act, I would like to request details of the number of times patients detained under the Mental Health Act have escaped/absconded, i.e. leaving care without permission.

For each year from 2014 to 2017 so far, please disclose the following:

Q1. *The number of times patients detained under the Mental Health Act have escaped/absconded.*

A1. The Trust is unable to collate data associated with the legal status of patients who have absconded, the dates on which they have absconded and the dates on which they were returned to each respective ward. The information requested is not held on a central information system. To obtain this information would require a manual review of individual patient records and need to individually analyse each incident report held manually.

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 letter acts as a Refusal Notice.

The Trust are able to provide a breakdown of the number of absconding incidents in each of the three years from April 2014 – March 2017 for all patients, voluntary and detained. Please see Table 1 below:

Table 1

	Ulster Hospital Ward 27	Lagan Valley Hospital Ward 12	Mental Health In Patient Unit Downe Hospital	Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit Downshire Hospital	Totals
2014-2015	18	49	15	7	89
2015-2016	19	50	13	1	83
2016-2017	25	68	5	3	101

- Q2. *For each instance, please disclose:*
- the location and name of the unit or facility where they escaped/absconded from;*
 - the date they left the facility;*
 - the date they were re-detained, or otherwise any other available details of what happened to the patient.*
- A2. Please see response to Q1 above.