

19 February 2020

**Our Ref:** RFI 33015

Dear

**Freedom of Information Act 2000  
Information in Relation to Smoking and Mental Health Inpatient Services**

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 January 2020.

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.

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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**Jane McCormick**  
**Information Governance Assistant**

**Can you provide separate information for each of your hospitals/facilities providing mental health inpatient services:**

**Q1. Is the hospital smoke free (i.e. does not allow smoking anywhere on hospital grounds) and, if yes, what date did this happen?**

A1. The Smoking (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 came into effect on 14 November 2006 with the intention of protecting public health by reducing the exposure to second-hand smoke. In 2015, the Northern Ireland Health Minister announced that all Health & Social Care Trusts will be smoke free by March 2016. In March 2016, the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (SET) implemented a smoke-free policy. The policy prohibits smoking or the use of e-cigarettes on all Trust premises, grounds, car parks and within Trust vehicles for patients, staff and members of the public

Following a Judicial Review challenge on the Department of Health's (DoH) Smoking Policy (and not the legislation), only mental health patients within SET are currently permitted to smoke in designated areas such as the gardens attached to the mental health wards. Special dispensation is granted for patients smoking in areas that are considered 'their private residential space' and this applies equally to mental health inpatients and those in sheltered accommodation.

**Q2. How many patients/service users have absconded/gone AWOL while on leave for each calendar year since 2000? By "leave" I mean a period of time outside the hospital grounds approved by a member of staff. For example, it might be several hours or 15 minutes for some fresh air, escorted by two nurses. I'd be looking for information on those who fail to return when expected, while on such leave.**

A2. The Trust does not hold information for the last 20 years as requested, however, the information for the last 10 years is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1

Year	Total
2009 - 10	89
2010 - 11	68
2011 - 12	71
2012 - 13	94
2013 - 14	132
2014 - 15	89
2015 - 16	83
2016 - 17	101
2017 - 18	34
2018 - 19	31

Prior to 2017 – 18, the recording of AWOL incidents was simply collated as one unique event and would have included those patients who failed to return from a period of planned leave or indeed absconded. In order to understand the reasons for the number of AWOL's reported in greater detail, we set about refining how we collated and recorded our data within the last two years and this is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Year	Failed to return	Other reasons	Total
2017 - 18	20	14	34
2018 - 19	20	11	31

**Q3. Of these, how many patients/service users have absconded/gone AWOL while on leave to have a cigarette or where the report mentions cigarettes for each calendar year since 2000?**

A3. The numbers detailed in Table 3 are small and on each occasion, patients absconded from the ward whilst being facilitated to smoke accompanied by ward staff.

Incidents are not recorded on the system with the level of detail as requested, however, the figures detailed in Table 3 identify those incidents with the word 'cigarette' within the incident description.

Table 3

Year	Number
2009 - 10	1
2010 - 11	1
2011 - 12	0
2012 - 13	1
2013 - 14	2
2014 - 15	0
2015 - 16	0
2016 - 17	0
2017 – 18	0
2018 - 19	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>

**Q4. When looking at all incident reports (not just those in which a patient absconded), how many incident reports mentioned "smoking", "smoke", "cigarette" or "lighter" a) in 2017, b) in 2018 and c) in 2019?**

A4. Please see Table 4.

Table 4

<b>Year</b>	<b>Incidents</b>
2017	123
2018	136
2019	99