

08 February 2022

Our Ref: RFI 40219

Dear

**Freedom of Information Act 2000
Information in relation to Autistic Spectrum Disorder 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 above which you requested on 2 August 2021. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your request, due to the impact of Winter Pressures that the Trust is currently facing. Thank you for your understanding and forbearance of this matter

A response to each of the questions raised has been provided by the Children's Services & Social Work 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 Assistant**

May I please have the questions below answered year by year:

- ***2018***
- ***2019***
- ***2020***
- ***And so far in 2021***

May I also have the data:

For Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (including Asperger's Syndrome).

For Adults with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (including Asperger's Syndrome).

Q1. Budget received and budget spent on ASD services.

A1. Adults Service

The Trust is unable to provide a full budget breakdown for all spend allocated to adults with autism due to Services being provided across multiple programmes of care.

Please refer to Attachment 1 - Trust ASD Services Spend for the core Adult Autism Service that has incurred spend against the staff costs and external contracts however this does not include spend on residential placements for adults with autism in independent sector providers; domiciliary care provision etc.

Children's Service

Please refer to Answer 2.

Q2. A breakdown of the expenditure.

A2. Adults Service

Please see Attachment 1 - Trust ASD Services Spend.

Children's Service

The response to question 1 & 2 is based on the data held by the Trust, in financial years, through to month 4 of 2021/2022. The financial budget and expenditure is broken down to Salaries and Wages (S&W) and Goods and Services (G&S). Please see Table 1.

Table 1

ASD Budget and Expenditure								
Year	2018/2019		2019/2020		2020/2021		2021/2022 Month 4	
	Budget	Expenditure	Budget	Expenditure	Budget	Expenditure	Budget	Expenditure
S&W	£590,039	£617,970	£668,943	£491,195	£941,368	£515,925	£232,214	£192,609
G&S	£203,129	£135,950	£273,405	£42,299	£69,329	£24,848	£23,110	£5215
Total	£793,168	£753,920	£942,348	£533,494	£1,010,697	£540,773	£255,324	£197,824

During the financial year 2018/2019 Commissioners identified two separate funding streams, one recurrent one non- recurrent. The recurrent was not released to the Trust, the non- recurrent was released, however the recruitment to non-recurrent posts was unsuccessful and funding was put against savings targets.

During the financial year 2019/2020 the recurrent funding identified in 2018/2019 was released to the Trust in 2019/2020 - What new money/posts came through in 2019/2020 – were they ASD only or Neurodevelopment/ADHD?

The Clinical Lead for ASD (Band 8C) post became vacant and proved challenging to successfully fill. The post was filled In June 2021. A member of staff was also on maternity leave, and it was not possible to recruit maternity cover.

During the financial year 2020/2021 the Trust received additional funding from commissioners for neurodevelopmental services, which was temporarily placed in ASD services.

Recruitment to new and vacant posts during the pandemic was undertaken. The Trust successfully recruited band 3 health assistants to support across the wider Neurodevelopment team incorporating ASD and ADHD services. Two Associate Psychologists were appointed. Both have since left to undertake Clinical Psychology training. This is challenge for the service as these posts attract individuals who are on a clinical psychology training pathway.

During financial year 2021/2022 The Trust successfully appointed the Clinical Lead for ASD, Band 8C, and the Trust is actively recruiting to replace the two Associate Psychologist posts.

The Service plans to reconfigure current budget from vacancies and to create a Band 8A Service Intervention Coordinator to support this element of service provision and identified need.

Q3. Clinical staff involved in making ASD diagnosis – broken into details of specialism. And weekly hours spent.

A3. Adults Service

All clinical staff listed in Attachment 1, Clinical Psychologist, Psychological Therapist and Occupational Therapist are involved in making ASD diagnosis and spend approximately 40% of their working week involved in ASD diagnostic assessment clinic.

Children's Service

Multiple staff from differing disciplines contributes to ASD assessment and intervention. A number of staff are funded directly in relation to providing services for ASD assessment and intervention only, others contribute as part of the wider Child Health, Allied Health Professional, Neurodevelopment and Mental Health Services.

The Trust does not separate Assessment and Intervention teams, most staff work across both assessment and intervention activities; job plans are fluid to adjust to demands in the service. Therefore it is not possible to break down into weekly hours spent in diagnostic activity. All staff undertake direct /contact with children and young people, and their roles also involves significant non-direct time ensuring appropriate recording, communications training, supervision is in place.

Please see Table 2 which notes the staffing disciplines and number of staff contributing to direct ASD assessment and intervention services. The table identifies the number of staff involved, some of who are part time and/or work across other services.

Table 2

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/21	2021/2022
Clinical Psychology	5	4	4	5
Speech & Language Therapy	6	6	6	6
Senior Practitioner Neurodevelopmental*	6	6	6	6
Practitioner Neurodevelopmental*	3	3	3	3
Occupational Therapy	2	1	2	2
Community Paediatrics	2	2	2	2

Q4. Number of Service users newly diagnosed.**A4. Adults Service**

Please see Table 3.

Table 3

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021 (to 31 July)
No. of Assessments Completed	The information for 2018 is not available	56 Assessments Offered 6 DNA 50 Assessments Completed	53 Assessment Offered 2 DNA 51 Assessments Completed	42 Assessments Offered 1 DNA 36 Assessments Completed
No. of Adults Diagnosed with ASD	The information for 2018 is not available	30	44	33

DNA = Did Note Attend

Please note the information requested for 2018 is not held on a central information system. To obtain this information would require a manual review of records.

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.

Children's Services

Please see Table 4.

Table 4

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021 (to 31 July)
No. of Service Users Diagnosed	458	348	200	289

Q5. *Number of Service users now collated on ASD database.*

A5. Adults Service

Due to data protection legislation the Trust does not hold a database of all clients diagnosed with ASD living within the Trust. The Adult ASD Service does operate an email list for clients who consent to receiving information from the Service. This is an operational management resource and not a database.

Children's Service

Due to data protection legislation the Trust does not hold an ASD database. Please see Table 5 for the number of children and young people with an ASD diagnosis who were open to intervention services within Trust.

Table 5

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021 (to 31 July)
No. of Children/Young People with ASD Diagnosis Open to Intervention Services.	1093	1056	1137	1300

Q6. Provision made for ASD support – pathways and clinical input by ASD employed trust personnel. Please include the medical SPECIALISMS involved in delivery and the clinical hours available weekly.

A6. Adults Service

Following diagnosis, the Adult ASD Service offers all newly diagnosed adults a post-diagnostic appointment. This is an opportunity for the individual with ASD (and if they choose, a partner/family member) to discuss their diagnosis and impact of same for them. It is also an opportunity to look at what support needs the individual currently requires.

The individual may then want to engage in intervention offered by the service, such as our group work programme which includes areas such as understanding ASD, managing emotions or our art work programme. They may also engage in individual sessions if unable to join the group work programme.

If required, the adult with ASD will be referred to another service either within or outside the Trust (we refer to various voluntary and community agencies such as Cedar Foundation, Now Project, etc.).

The Adult ASD Service works alongside the Trust Recovery College to deliver courses.

Interventions are delivered by the clinical specialists who work in the team as detailed in Attachment 1. An Arts Care artist delivers the art groups.

Pathway for individuals:

- Diagnostic assessment
- Post diagnostic appointment
- Carers assessment (offered)
- Group work programme (or individual sessions), as required
- Discharge
- Access to the Service Advice Clinic. This is available to individuals who have accessed the Adult ASD Service. It offers a one off appointment with a member of the clinical team, to consult on a specific issue or question for the individual.

In addition to the specific autism intervention offered by the Adult Autism Service, all adults with autism who require medical or other intervention (e.g. for associated mental or physical health conditions) access the same pathways for referrals as all other residents in the Trust.

Children's Service

2018 - Early 2020.

Children diagnosed with ASD are opened to the Autism Intervention Service. The 1st intervention post-diagnosis is the General Awareness Training for parents. This is delivered by ASD clinicians (as listed in Table 2), with input from Education Authority colleagues, every 8 weeks. After this a range of ASD workshops are offered to parents; these last approximately 2hrs and are delivered by ASD clinicians. All parents of children diagnosed with autism are offered this training and workshops.

The Speech and Language Therapists working within the ASD Service offer both individual and group intervention to children with a diagnosis. This need is identified during the diagnostic assessment.

Psychology clinicians within ASD services offer both individual and group intervention.

2020 – 3 February 2022.

Due to Covid related restrictions the service was unable to deliver face-to-face support. In response to this the Intervention Service adapted: a Telephone Advice Clinic was introduced; this is staffed by ASD clinicians on a rota basis. Parent training materials were developed and delivered as a pack. Parent workshops were converted to delivery via a virtual platform, Zoom, and Page Tiger links have been introduced for post-diagnostic support. In addition parents are being sent resources via email on a regular basis, for those with children on the assessment pathway and post-diagnosis.

Intervention appointments are being delivered via Zoom, both individual and group.

The service has responded to the relaxation of restrictions and face-to-face services are being reintroduced.

Q7. *Provision for mental health support for ASD patients and service users.*

A7. Adults Service

Adults with ASD who require input from Mental Health Services can be referred directly by their GP to the Mental Health Assessment Centre. Clients will be allocated Services based upon their assessment of need. Clients attending the Adult Autism Service can also be referred directly to Mental Health Services. Clients can receive Services from both Adult Autism Services and Mental Health Services either consecutively or concurrently.

Children's Service

Children and young people with a diagnosis of autism can avail of the services (outlined in the response to Question 6) to support their emotional health and well-being. Where mental health needs are identified, children can be referred to the Child and adolescent mental health services run by the Belfast Trust (CAMHS), both Step 2 and Step 3 via the Trust's Single Point of Entry. Consultation and joint working is available from ASD psychology to support CAMHS colleagues

Q8. *Support for ASD provided by external agencies – and what services are provided by these agencies.*

A8. Adults Service

Adults with ASD living within the Trust area can access a range of support from external agencies. This can include autism-specific agencies e.g. National Autistic Society and Autism NI; smaller local support providers e.g. Autism Initiatives; and support from generic agencies e.g. Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Housing Executive. The Trust does not hold a comprehensive list of all agencies operating within Trust boundaries. The Adult Autism Service liaises with external agencies on a case by case basis in respect of individual clients.

Children's Service

Non-recurrent funding has been utilised by the Trust for short-term contracts with external agencies such as Barnardo's Forward Steps, Cedar Foundation, YMCA and NAS.

Due to the nature of the funding these have been short-term and time specific in nature and the Trust does not have any contracts in place currently.

A range of private, independent, voluntary and community sector organisations operate within the Trust area offering a range of services and supports for autistic people.

Q9. *The number of ASD patients in cared for placement in the trust.*

A9. Adults Service

ASD patients in cared for placement within the Trust does not apply to Adult Services, it only applies to Children's Services.

Children's Service

The information in relation to children looked after who have a diagnosis of ASD is not held on a central information system. To obtain this information would require a manual review of records.

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.

Q10. *The number of ASD patients in the community.*A10. Adults Service

The Trust does not hold this information on a database, Please refer to response to Question 5.

Children's Service

Please refer to the response to Question 5.