

09 June 2022

Our Ref: RFI 43728

Dear

**Freedom of Information Act 2000
Information in relation to Freedom of Information Requests received by the
Trust.**

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 29 March 2022. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your request.

A response to each of the questions raised has been provided by the Human Resources & Corporate Affairs 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

- Q1. For the period 16th March – 17th July 2020 (i.e., when ICO had indicated a sympathetic approach to delay), provide precise data if available e.g., 15 out of 30 requests, and if not, provide an estimate e.g., 10%, for these questions:**
- (a) How many responses to FOI requests were issued within 20 working days of receipt by your organisation?**
 - (b) How many responses to FOI review requests were issued within 20 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?**
 - (c) How many responses to FOI requests were issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt by your organisation?**
 - (d) How many responses to FOI review requests were issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?**

A1. Please see Table 1 for responses to Q1a & 1c.

Table1

16 March 2020 to 17 July 2020		
No. of requests	No. of FOI responses issued within 20 working days of receipt	FOI issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt
91	40	45

A1b&d. There were no FOI requests received requesting an internal review during the dates 16 March 2020 to 17 July 2020.

- Q2. For the period 18th July – 8th October 2020 (i.e., during the ‘preparing for recovery’ phase), provide precise data if available e.g., 15 out of 30 requests, and if not, provide an estimate e.g., 10%, for these questions:**
- (a) How many responses to FOI requests were issued within 20 working days of receipt by your organisation?**
 - (b) How many responses to FOI review requests were issued within 20 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?**
 - (c) How many responses to FOI requests were issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt by your organisation?**

(d) How many responses to FOI review requests were issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?

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A2. Please see Table 2 for responses to Q2a & 2c.
Please see table 3 for responses to Q2b & 2d.

Table 2

18 July 2020 to 8 October 2020		
No. of requests received	No. of FOI responses issued within 20 working days of receipt	No. of FOI responses issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt
77	43	33

Table 3

18 July 2020 to 8 October 2020		
No. of internal review requests received	No. of FOI internal review requests that were issued within 20 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?	No. of FOI internal review requests that were issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?
2	Nil	1

Q3. During the period 1st March to 30th October 2020, provide precise data if available e.g., 15 out of 30 requests, and if not, provide an estimate e.g., 10%, for these questions:

- (a) How many responses to FOI requests were issued more than 60 working days after receipt of the request?**
- (b) How many responses to FOI review requests were issued more than 60 working days after receipt of a request for an internal review?**

A3. Please see Table 4 for response to Q1a.
Please see Table 5 for response to Q1b.

Table 4

1 March 2020 to 30 October 2020	
No. of FOI requests received	No. of FOI responses issued more than 60 working days after receipt
200	14

1 March 2020 to 30 October 2020	
No. of requests received	No. of FOI internal review responses issued more than 60 working days after receipt of a request for an

	internal review
2	1

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Q4. When FOI request or review responses were issued more than 21 working days after receipt during the period 1st March and 30th October 2020, what were the main reasons for the delay? e.g., closure of premises due to Covid-19, reallocation of resources due to Covid-19, staff shortages due to Covid-19, absence of key staff due to Covid-19, limited access to necessary systems due to Covid-19, other issue related/unrelated to Covid19.

A4. The main reason for the delay to FOI responses that issued more than 21 working days of receipt was due to the Health & Social Care experiencing unprecedented pressures and staff having to prioritise their duties to focus on pressing front line health and social care activities. Tasks, such as investigating and responding to requests for information and enquiries were significantly delayed due to the requirement of prioritising professional caring duties and responding to the challenges posed by the health crisis.

In addition, at key periods during the pandemic, many of the corporate service staff were redeployed within the Trust to assist with front line duties and to allow priority to be given to managing the pandemic. Members of staff from the Information Governance Department were also released at this time to support frontline services.

Q5. In relation to the FOI requests received by your organisation between 1st March and 30th October 2020, what proportion related directly to Covid-19, your organisation's Covid-19 response or impact of the pandemic on your organisation? (Provide precise data if available e.g., 15 out of 30 requests, and if not, provide an estimate e.g., 10%)

A5. From 1 March 2020 to 30 October 2020 there were 200 FOI requests received and 31 of these requests related directly to Covid-19.

Q6. On 17th July 2020 the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) launched a self-assessment Freedom of Information toolkit (FOI self-assessment toolkit | ICO) to help public authorities respond to FOI requests as they prepared to recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

(a) Does, or has your organisation ever, use/d the toolkit? If so, please explain whether it has it had any positive outcomes.

(b) If your organisation has not/does not make use of the toolkit, please explain why not.

- A6. No, the Trust does not use the toolkit. Information Governance who process FOI's adhere to a specific Trust policy.
In accordance with Trust procedures, Information Governance refers to the ICO guidance when required.

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Appendix A

Q7. *In response to Covid19, has the volume of information your organisation publishes:*

(a) not changed

(b) significantly increased

(c) significantly decreased

(d) don't know

- A7. In response to Covid-19, the volume of information that the Trust publishes has significantly increased.

Q8. *Has your organisation taken steps to proactively publish information relating to Covid-19, your organisation's Covid-19 response or the impact of the pandemic on your organisation? If it includes a dedicated webpage, please provide a link to the webpage.*

- A8. Yes, the Trust have created a webpage to publish information relating to Covid-19, please find website link below:

[Coronavirus Information | South Eastern HSC Trust \(hscni.net\)](https://www.hscni.net/coronavirus)