



25 June 2024

**Our Ref:** RFI58516

**Freedom of Information Act 2000  
Information in Relation to Access to instrumental assessment within SLT  
services in NI**

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 8 May 2024. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your request. Thank you for your understanding and forbearance.

A response to each of the questions raised has been provided by Primary Care & Older People's Services 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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**Rebecca Manning**  
**Information Governance Officer**

**Q1. Within your trust, do you offer the following types of instrumental assessment within table 1?**

A1. Please see Table 1.

Table 1

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Access to Videofluoroscopy</b>	<b>Access to Fibre Optic Endoscopic Examination of Swallowing</b>
Adult acute (do not include Learning Disability or head and neck cancer/oncology here) include stroke, dementia, general acute and neuro disability	Yes	Yes
Adult Community (do not include Learning Disability or head and neck cancer/oncology here) include stroke, dementia, general acute and neuro disability	Yes	Yes
Learning disability	Yes	Yes
Paediatrics – acute	No	No
Paediatrics – community	No	No
Head and Neck cancer / Oncology (acute and community)	Yes	Yes
Other – please specify	No	No

**Q2. How many assessments for the following, in table 2, have been carried out in your trust, per calendar year 2019 until 2023?**

**If your trust provides a regional service, please indicate how many assessments were carried out for both trust domiciled patients and those patients living outside of the trust area.**

A2. Please see Table 2.

Table 2

Service Area	Year	VFSS – Within Trust	VFSS – Outside of Trust	FEES – Within Trust	FEES – Outside of Trust
Adult acute (do not include Learning Disability or head and neck cancer here) include stroke, dementia, general acute and neuro disability)	2019	83	26	1	2
	2020	62	29	1	Nil
	2021	41	16	19	2
	2022	75	25	38	11
	2023*	70	24	17	5
Adult community (do not include Learning Disability or head and neck cancer here) include stroke, dementia, general acute and neuro disability)	2019	228	12	16	4
	2020	132	6	8	Nil
	2021	125	Nil	53	3
	2022	190	1	55	7
	2023*	203	6	105	3
Adult learning disability	2019	14	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2020	6	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2021	3	Nil	Nil	1
	2022	5	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2023*	8	1	Nil	Nil
Paediatrics – acute	2019	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2020	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2021	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2022	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2023*	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Paediatrics – community	2019	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2020	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2021	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2022	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2023*	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Head and Neck cancer / Oncology - acute and community	2019	10	2	Nil	Nil
	2020	3	5	Nil	Nil
	2021	2	Nil	Nil	1
	2022	4	1	Nil	1
	2023*	6	1	4	2
Other – please specify	2019	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2020	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2021	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2022	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	2023*	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

\*Please note the Trust can only provide figures up to 9 November 2023 due to migrating to the new Encompass system.

**Q3. Please indicate which hospital in your trust area is providing these services?**

A3. Please see Table 3 for the Trust hospitals providing these services.

Table 3

Hospital	VFS	FEES
Lagan Valley Hospital	No	Yes
Ulster Hospital	Yes	Yes
Downe Hospital	No	Yes

**Q4. Can all patients (from all service areas outlined in question 1) in your trust area access instrumental assessment if clinically indicated?**

A4. No, not all patients within the Trust area can access the service.

**Q5. If instrumental assessment is not available to patients within all service areas (listed in question 1) / hospitals, do you have a process in place to refer patients to other hospitals within your trust?**

A5. No, the Trust does not have a process in place to refer patients to other hospitals within the Trust.

**Q6. If instrumental assessment is not available to patients within all service areas (listed in question 1) / hospitals, do you have a process in place to refer patients to other hospitals outside of your trust?**

A6. Yes, the Trust has a process in place to refer patients to other hospitals outside of the Trust.

**Q7. If your trust is not able to offer instrumental assessment within all service areas, what steps have been taken, as per table 4, to manage the risks of not having adequate instrumental assessments available for those service users where it is clinically indicated?**

A7. Please see Table 4.

Table 4

Actions	Yes	No
Risk assessment/ inclusion on risk register		No
Business case to increase provision/ develop a service.		No
Exploring alternative means of accessing instrumental assessment including outside the Trust.	Yes, the Trusts Paediatric Service access VFSS at the Royal Hospital, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust.	
Reliance on one form of instrumental assessment when another is clinically indicated but not available e.g., use of Videofluoroscopy when FEES would be indicated as more clinically appropriate.		No
Clinical Swallowing Assessment only	Yes, available to all Trust Patients, however FEES and VFS is only available to Adult Patients	
Other – please comment.	N/A	N/A

**Q8. If your trust is not able to offer instrumental assessment within all service areas, please indicate any challenges, as per Table 5, to provision of instrumental assessment in your trust?**

A8. Please see Table 5.

Table 5

Is this a Challenge?	Yes	No
Funding – a. Staff (SLT, admin and/or radiology to organise and run clinics, provide governance)  b. Training (including ongoing training needs once clinic established to ensure pipeline of trained professionals)	Yes	
Access to training for SLT staff	Yes	
Access to training for Radiology staff		N/A – requested data does not relate to Radiology Services/Staff
Timetabling. i.e., availability of clinic and staff	Accommodation / Admin support is a challenge	
Necessary equipment		No
Other – please specify.	N/A	N/A