



9 October 2024

Our Ref: RFI 59469

Dear

**Freedom of Information Act 2000
Information in Relation to Addiction Care and Opioid Substitute Programmes**

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 13 August 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 the Adult Services & 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) 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 Officer

Q1. Please provide the average waiting time for patients in the community to be provided with addiction care and treatment following a request, particularly for those requiring placement on an opioid substitute programme.

A1. The current Regional target time frames from referral to assessment for generic community addiction treatment is an appointment within nine weeks and for Opioid Substitution this is an appointment within three weeks. The average waiting time for a generic Community Addiction appointment is between 4 - 5 weeks. The average waiting time for those referred for Opioid Substitution is between 1 - 2 weeks.

Q2. The standard protocols and Guidelines followed by the SEHSCT in assessing and responding to requests for addiction treatment, including the criteria used to prioritize patients for opioid substitute programmes.

A2. The Trust has a standardised Operational Community Addiction Policy as well as an Operational Policy for Shimna House, Inpatient detox unit and are also guided by the Regional Operational Guidance for Tier 4 services. All Staff practice within the Northern Ireland Care & Excellence (NICE) Guidelines and Best practice.

The Substance Misuse Strategy 2021 - 2031 also provides direction in service improvements. In relation to the Trusts Opioid Substitution programmes these are based on the Drug Misuse and Dependence: UK guidelines in clinical management (2017) also referred to as 'Orange guidelines'.

All referrals are deemed a priority however the current criteria for giving priority over others for Opioid substitution includes Pregnant patients, those with a positive Blood borne virus (Hep C/HIV), injecting drug users and those with significant physical health issues relating to their drug use.

Q3. The percentage of patients who are provided with addiction treatment within the target timeframes set by the SEHSCT, particularly in relation to opioid substitute programmes.

A3. In general the overall percentage of patients provided with appointments within target timeframes for both generic Community Addiction treatment and Opioid Substitution treatment is between 99% - 100%.

Q4. Any relevant policies or procedures governing the SEHSCT's response times and treatment allocation for patients requesting addiction care, specifically focusing on opioid substitution.

- A4. Each team within Addiction Services submit weekly waiting list reports and monthly breach proforma reports to the Addiction Service Co-Ordinator who then forwards the reports to the Strategic, Planning & Performance Group (SPPG).

Monthly reports are submitted to the SPPG in relation to Opioid Substitution capturing data on number of referral, timeframe between referral and assessment and the number of current patients receiving Opioid Substitution treatment.