

FOI 3761

1<sup>st</sup> June 2026

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – INFORMATION REQUEST

I would like to request the following information relating to Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision within the Southern Trust, covering the most recent full financial year for which data is available:

### 1. Staffing

The number of whole-time equivalent (WTE) staff employed specifically in SEN or learning disability support roles (children and young people), broken down by role/profession (e.g. speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, specialist nurses, educational psychologists, support workers)

Response:

### WTE of Staff in SEN & Children & Young People Learning Disability Roles as at 31 March 2026

*Note: Figures exclude Bank Staff and Staff on Career Break/Seconded Out of the Trust*

| Job Role                     | WTE at 31 Mar 26 |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Admin & Clerical             | 1.00             |
| Paediatric Nurses            | 0.91             |
| AHP Support/Assistants*      | 6.73             |
| Occupational Therapists      | 12.99            |
| Physiotherapists             | 7.31             |
| Speech & Language Therapists | 12.49            |
| SEN Coordinator              | 1.00             |
| SEN Project Manager          | 1.00             |
| <b>Overall Total</b>         | <b>43.43</b>     |

*\*Includes Multi AHP, Physiotherapy & Speech & Language Therapy Support Roles*

In addition, across Paediatric Services there are several teams/specialities that support SEN as part of their core work but aren't commissioned solely for SEN work.

|                                      |                                             |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Paed Continence</i>               | <i>Paed Epilepsy</i>                        | <i>Paed Diabetes</i>                  |
| <i>Paed Respiratory</i>              | <i>Community Paediatrics</i>                | <i>Paed Dietitians</i>                |
| <i>Speech &amp; Language Therapy</i> | <i>Physiotherapy</i>                        | <i>Occupational Therapy</i>           |
| <i>RISE NI</i>                       | <i>Pre-school Child development Service</i> | <i>Childrens Complex Therapy Team</i> |
| <i>Autism Services</i>               | <i>CAMHS</i>                                | <i>ADHD service</i>                   |

## **The number of agency/bank staff used in SEN roles and associated costs**

### **Response:**

There are 2 Bank staff that support SEN children within schools, these are adhoc and managed via CCN team.

There are no bank or agency Orthoptists used in the delivery of SEN provision.

## **2. Costs**

### **The total expenditure on SEN-related services for children and young people**

**A breakdown of costs by service type (e.g. therapy services, specialist residential/respite, day provision, community support)**

**Any SEN-related packages commissioned from the independent/voluntary sector and the total value of those contracts**

### **Response:**

SHSCT does not hold the financial information separately identifiable to the level of detail requested in the FOI.

As such we cannot provide this information as the cost of locating and retrieving the information exceeds the “appropriate limit” as stated in the Freedom of Information (Fees and Appropriate Limit) Regulations 2004. In order to obtain this information would exceed the £450 limit and is therefore cost prohibitive.

Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Public Authorities are not obliged to comply with an information request where to do so would exceed the cost limit.

## **3. Facilities and Resources**

**A list of facilities operated or commissioned by the Trust specifically for children and young people with SEN or learning disabilities, including type of provision and location**

### **Response:**

The Trust commission a number of services from community providers who facilitate support to Children with Disabilities which include

| Name                     | Location                       | Provision                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| IncredABLE               | Various locations across Trust | Saturday Respite<br><br>Afterschool's<br><br>Peer Support<br><br>Youth Empowerment<br><br>Individual support sessions |
| Barnardos                | Armagh                         | Advocacy group for teenagers                                                                                          |
| Cedar                    | Various locations across Trust | Support sessions                                                                                                      |
| YMCA                     | Lurgan                         | Youth club                                                                                                            |
| Brain Injury Trust       | Various locations across Trust | Supports for children and families                                                                                    |
| Sticky Fingers           | Newry                          | Afterschool sessions<br><br>Preschool sessions                                                                        |
| Goal Line                | Craigavon                      | Youth club                                                                                                            |
| Cancer Fund for Children | Newcastle , Belfast            | Cancer supports for children and families                                                                             |
| NI Hospice               | Belfast                        | Overnight provision for life limited children                                                                         |
|                          |                                |                                                                                                                       |

In addition, short breaks continue to be provided to children and families in a range of other ways through Self direct support packages, Summer Schemes, Day Clubs, voluntary sector individual development schemes, Supported Playgroup Scheme, Specialist Childminding Scheme, Education Authority/Southern Trust development schemes, Domiciliary Care and Youth Clubs.

#### **Details of any specialist residential or respite facilities, including capacity and current occupancy**

#### **Response:**

Bluebell House is a full time Childrens Home for up to five young people with Learning disabilities and challenging behaviour aged 12-18. Oaklands Short Break Unit is a 3 bedded unit which operates on a 7 night per week basis offering regular planned overnight

short breaks to 17 young people. Willowgrove (Barnardos) is a 4 bedded unit which operates on a 6 night basis offering regular planned short breaks to 15 young people.

The Short Breaks Team provides a family based short breaks resource for children with a disability using registered specialist foster carers recruited for this purpose. Recruitment is managed via a regional portal and the team provides a mixture of full-time, fee-paid and short break overnight placements. For May 2026 there are currently 5 children with highly complex needs in 4 full-time fee-paid placements. Another fee-paid carer is contracted to provide 16 overnight short breaks per month and facilitates short breaks for 6 children. There are 23 short break carers registered (15 active) and 23 children are currently receiving a service whilst a further 6 are undergoing introductions.

#### 4. Demand and Waiting Times

##### Response:

The number of children and young people currently on a waiting list for SEN-related assessment or services

| Specialty                   | Number of children |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Occupational therapy        | 802                |
| Orthoptics                  | 389                |
| Physiotherapy               | 252                |
| Speech and language therapy | 1148               |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b>          | <b>1663*</b>       |

Please note - as the question asks number of children by service, we have counted each child once per service. This is why the grand total is 1663 (total number of children) instead of 2591 (when services are added together) as children are waiting across multiple services.

##### Average waiting time for initial assessment and for access to services, by service type

##### Response:

| Specialty            | Average of total days waiting (days) FY 2025/26 |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Occupational therapy | 355                                             |
| Orthoptics           | 167                                             |
| Physiotherapy        | 57                                              |

|                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Speech and language therapy | 74 |
|-----------------------------|----|

Within CCN teams there is no waiting list for initial assessment, care is delivered based on assessed need of the child or young person.

Children with SEN can attend any Paediatric service across the ST, these waiting lists are not broken down to reflect SEN and non - SEN children.

## 5. Strategic and Governance Information

**Any current strategy, policy, or action plan relating to SEN provision held by the Trust**

### Response:

There are no current strategies, policies or action plans relating to SEN provision held by the SHSCT.

Services are managed within the Trust Governance framework

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