

FOI 3825

23rd June 2026

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – INFORMATION REQUEST

I am writing to make a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Please provide the following information for the most recent available period, and where possible, for each of the last four quarters.

1. Waiting Lists by Type of Arthritis

Q1A. Please provide a breakdown of waiting lists from the past four quarters by specific type of arthritis (including, but not limited to, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, and other inflammatory arthropathies).

Response:

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.

Unfortunately we are unable to provide the information you have requested 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. It has been estimated that it would take more than 18 hours to locate and retrieve the requested information. In order to obtain this information and it would exceed the £450 limit and is therefore cost prohibitive.

Furthermore, under Section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act, we can advise that it would require an extensive manual review of individual patient records just to ascertain if information relevant to your request is held. As such, we advise that there is no way to refine this request to bring it within the appropriate limit.

Waiting list data is held and reported by clinical specialty rather than by specific diagnosis or condition. As such, we are unable to provide waiting list volumes broken down by individual arthritis types.

Q1B. Please provide the number of patients waiting for initial consultation and for treatment within the Southern HSC Trust in the last four quarters.

Response:

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.

Unfortunately we are unable to provide the information you have requested 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. It has been estimated that it would take more than 18 hours to locate and retrieve the requested information. In order to obtain this information and it would exceed the £450 limit and is therefore cost prohibitive.

Furthermore, under Section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act, we can advise that it would require an extensive manual review of individual patient records just to ascertain if information relevant to your request is held. As such, we advise that there is no way to refine this request to bring it within the appropriate limit.

The Trust is unable to identify patients waiting specifically for arthritis-related care, as waiting lists are not categorised by condition. Therefore this data cannot be provided.

2. Procedural Type Data

Q2A. Please provide a breakdown of waiting list numbers by procedure type related to orthopaedic and arthritis care (for example, Total Hip Replacement, Total Knee Replacement, hand/wrist surgery and spinal procedures).

Response:

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.

Unfortunately we are unable to provide the information you have requested 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. It has been estimated that it would take more than 18 hours to locate and retrieve the requested information. In order to obtain this information and it would exceed the £450 limit and is therefore cost prohibitive.

Furthermore, under Section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act, we can advise that it would require an extensive manual review of individual patient records just to ascertain if information relevant to your request is held. As such, we advise that there is no way to refine this request to bring it within the appropriate limit.

This would be total waiting for procedures and not be specific to arthritis-related cases. The Trust does not undertake spinal procedures; therefore, no data is available for that category, therefore this data cannot be provided.

Q2B. Please provide the average waiting times for each procedure type over the past four quarters.

Response:

This information is not held.

3. Removals from Orthopaedic Waiting Lists

Q3A. Please provide the number of patients removed from orthopaedic waiting lists within the Southern HSC Trusts over the last four quarters.

Response:

Please refer to 'Attachment 1 – Arthritis Waiting Lists'. Please see breakdown information in response to Q3B (also provided within attachment 1).

Q3B. Please provide a breakdown of the reasons for removal, including (but not limited to): treatment completed elsewhere, patient choice, clinical decision, non-attendance, administrative removal, or other categories used.

Response: Please refer to 'Attachment 1 – Arthritis Waiting Lists' for all reasons for removal.

Q3C. Please outline the Trusts policy of PIFU. (Patient Initiated Follow Up)

Response: The Trust does not have a specific policy in relation to PIFU. As part of Out-Patient Modernisation the introduction of PIFU is being undertaken with a small number of specialties utilising it. In line with PIFU guidance a patient must first accept, following discussion at their new out-patient appointment, if they wish to go on to a PIFU pathway.

4. Deaths While on Waiting Lists

In light of Professor Mark Taylor informing the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Health on 23.04.26 that roughly 6000 people had died on waiting lists in the last year.

4A. Please outline the number of patients who died while on an orthopaedic waiting list within the last four quarters.

If possible, could this data be separated by type of orthopaedic wait as well as separated between outpatient and inpatient.

Response:

Please see 'Attachment 1 – Arthritis Waiting Lists'.

Please note the attached Epic data is based on the following:

- *Data Model: Waiting Lists*
- *Population Base: All Waiting Lists (run date: 17/06/2026)*
- *Waiting List Removal Date between 07/05/2025 to 31/03/2026*
- *Intended Management: Inpatient, Inpatient Series, Day Admit, Day Admit Series, Night Admit Series*
- *Specialties: Orthopaedics, Orthopaedic Trauma, Orthopaedic Elective*

5. Cross Border Reimbursement Scheme (Reimbursement Clarification)

Please Provide:

1. Please provide a description of the methodology used by the Trust to calculate reimbursement amounts for treatments accessed under the scheme.

Response: The Cross Border Reimbursement Scheme is administered by the Strategic Planning & Performance Group (SPPG) of the Department of Health NI, and therefore, the Trust does not hold this information.

To submit a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG), please contact the Business Services Organisation (BSO). To do so please direct your written request to:

Corporate Services Department
6th Floor, Business Services Organisation
2 Franklin Street
Belfast, BT2 8DQ

1. Please outline any guidance documents, internal policies, or standard operating procedures used in determining reimbursement levels.

Response: The Cross Border Reimbursement Scheme is administered by the SPPG Please see response previous response.

1. Please provide information on how Health and Social Care Northern Ireland equivalent costs are calculated for the purpose of reimbursement.

Response: The Cross Border Reimbursement Scheme is administered by the SPPG Please see response previous response.

1. Please provide details of any caps, limits, or thresholds applied to reimbursement amounts.

Response: The Cross Border Reimbursement Scheme is administered by the SPPG Please see response previous response.

1. Please detail any assessments, reviews, or analysis carried out since the introduction of the scheme regarding whether reimbursement levels reflect the actual cost of treatment in the Republic of Ireland.

Response: The Cross Border Reimbursement Scheme is administered by the SPPG Please see response previous response.

1. Please outline how the Trust calculates the cost of a procedure in the Republic of Ireland, and does this policy be regularly updated to reflect the changes in prices of services in the Republic of Ireland.

Response: The Cross Border Reimbursement Scheme is administered by the SPPG
Please see response previous response.

Email: Foi.Team@Southerntrust.hscni.net