

FOI – 1623

9th May 2023

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – INFORMATION REQUEST

Please may you provide me with the following:

- 1. Does the trust use dogs for any therapeutic or medicinal purposes (eg. PAT / autism/epilepsy/ diabetes assistance) within your hospitals or for patients at home?**

Bluestone - PAT, specifically dog therapy is utilised within Bluestone Mental Health and Learning Disability Inpatient Unit. This therapy has been utilised as a therapeutic support to people living with intellectual disability, autism and dementia.

Supported Living - Therapy dog visits two Trust Supported Living facilities in the Armagh / Dungannon area.

Sensory Services - Sensory services have links with a number of organisations that use / provide dogs for therapy, rehab and support for those with sensory loss. These include Guide Dogs NI for blind/partially sighted adults, Buddy Dogs for the blind and partially sighted children and hearing dogs for Deaf people. These dogs provide therapeutic and practical support for those with a sight or hearing loss.

Adult Community Services Directorate response:

The provision of Pets as Therapy is one of our volunteer roles for Trust volunteers. Although we had not had anyone fulfil this role in the past 3-4 years, very recently a recruited volunteer attended Lisnally Day Centre with their dog. In this case (as in previous instances), the dog was passed fit to attend facilities by the Pets as Therapy charity and has been assessed by a vet. The volunteer was recruited through our volunteer service with all the usual checks.

- 2. If so, are these dogs engaged as part of the NHS or through an external organisation (such as Support Dogs charity)**

Bluestone - External organisation – ‘Paws for thought’

Supported Living – External organisation - Assistant Dogs NI

Sensory Services – External organisations - Guide Dogs NI, Buddy Dogs, Hearing Dogs

- 3. Please could you specify how many dogs have been engaged for each of the last ten calendar years (2012-2022), broken down by purpose. (eg. PAT / autism/epilepsy/ diabetes assistance)**

Bluestone - PAT is a relatively new therapy within Bluestone, commenced in 2022, 3 dogs total thus far from this organisation – for people living with ID, Autism and Dementia

Supported Living - 1 dog has been attending since January 2023 purpose therapy for individuals with autism

Sensory Services - Sensory teams refer on to these services who will complete their own assessment and allocation of Dogs, this information is generally not recorded in service user's files.

- 4. Please list the main breeds used with the most commonly used breeds first.**

Bluestone - Labrador, Collie, Pomeranian

Supported Living - Golden Labrador

Sensory – Trust do not hold this information but various breeds are used to support those with a sensory loss.

- 5. How many full time members of staff (trainers, handlers, officers etc) worked with these dogs for each of the years in the same period?**

Bluestone - 2 trainers and 2 staff members

Supported Living -1 dog handler. Staff supporting dependent on patient need

Sensory – Unknown. This information would be held by the organisations that train and provide the guide dogs for those with a sensory loss.

- 6. What was the trust's total budget for each of these years and how much was allocated to the dog unit?**

Bluestone - There is no set budget for this therapy, it is supported via the SHSCTs Endowment and Gifts Directorate Budget

Supported Living - Tenants pay for the service