



Dear

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request, received on 30/10/2024. Please find our response below regarding the document redaction processes, tools, and associated challenges within our organisation.

1. Redaction Process and Standards

Our organisation follows rigorous guidelines and standards to ensure the confidentiality and protection of personal and sensitive information during document redaction. These include:

- **Guidance:** Compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and NHS Digital guidelines.
- **Standards:** Internal policies aligned with ISO/IEC 27001 (Information Security Management).
- **Process:** Documents are reviewed manually to identify sensitive information, which is redacted using approved tools. A second-level manual review is conducted to ensure accuracy and compliance.

2. Tools and Manual Redaction Processes

Our organisation does not currently use AI or automated tools for document redaction. Instead, we rely on:

- **Manual Redaction Tools:** Software such as Adobe Acrobat Pro, which provides robust functionality for securely redacting sensitive information.
- **Quality Assurance:** All redacted documents are reviewed manually to ensure compliance with data protection requirements.

3. Training for Staff

Staff involved in document redaction receive regular training, including:

- **Data Protection Compliance:** Comprehensive training on the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, and confidentiality principles.
- **Redaction Procedures:** Practical training on the use of manual redaction tools to ensure effective and accurate redaction.
- **Identifying Sensitive Information:** Specific modules to help staff recognise patterns and data types requiring redaction, such as personal identifiers, medical information, and financial details.

4. Challenges and Mitigation

The primary challenges faced during the document redaction process include:

- **Time-Intensive Nature:** Manual redaction is resource-intensive, particularly for large or complex documents.
- **Human Error:** Despite thorough training, occasional errors may occur in identifying sensitive information.



- **Complex Document Formats:** Non-standard or handwritten formats can be more challenging to redact effectively.

To mitigate these challenges, the trust ensures a robust quality assurance process, thorough training for staff, and ongoing refinement of procedures.

Please note that, under the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations, if you wish to publish or otherwise use this information besides for your own means, you will need to seek our permission to do so.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter.

In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Director of Planning, Performance and Corporate Services, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) HSC Trust, Site 30, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast, BT8 8SG.

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request, you may make a complaint under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the Trust has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act.

You can write to the Information Commissioner at:

Email: ni@ico.org.uk

Website: [ICO Website](#)

Post: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE SK9 5AF

Telephone: 028 9027 8757 or 0303 123 1114 (Belfast based Office)

In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out. However the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that NIAS replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ <https://nias.hscni.net> Personal details in respect of your request will have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

Kind Regards

| Information Governance Officer | Northern Ireland Ambulance Service

Site 30 | Knockbracken Healthcare Park | Saintfield Road | Belfast | Northern Ireland | BT8 8SG |



Dear Sir/Madam

This is a request for records under the Freedom of Information Act (2000). I am requesting the record about document redaction in detail. In particular, I ask for:

- Please describe the process and standards used by your organization to redact documents. Specifically, what guidelines, standards, or procedures are followed to protect personal and sensitive information?
- Does your organization use any tools, software, or automated systems for document redaction? If yes, please specify the types of tools used (e.g., AI-based systems, machine learning models, manual redaction tools).
- Please provide details about any AI or machine learning technologies used to support document redaction, including the names of any software or vendors. If an automated tool or AI-based system is used for document redaction, does your organization include a human review step in the process before finalizing redaction? Please describe the role of human reviewers.
- Please provide details on training provided to individuals involved in the document redaction process, particularly for AI-based or automated redaction tools. How are staff trained to identify sensitive information and use these tools effectively?
- What are the biggest challenges your organization faces when redacting documents particularly when using automated or AI-based systems?

Disclosure of the requested information to me is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to the public understanding of the operations or activities of the public authorities; and is not primarily my commercial interest. I hope you will be able to provide this information. If I can assist in any way, please let me know.

Yours faithfully