



31 July 2024

Email:

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Request No: 29304-24
Subject: IT devices and software
Date Received: 09/07/2024
Date of Monitoring: 09/07/2024

Thank you for your request for information received on 9th July 2024 which was dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Health and Social Care Trust has now completed its search for the information you requested and that is detailed below.

Please see attached completed pdf document as requested. The NIAS would further advise that the below question within the body of your request has not been answered and the reason for this is detailed below.

Question

Other software/apps (mention the name of the software)

Answer

The trust has applied the following exemption to the release of information requested.

Refusal Notice – (Section 31(1)(a) – Likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime.

I can confirm that NIAS holds the information relevant to your request. However, this information is exempt under Section 31(1) (a) (prevention or detection of crime) of the Freedom of Information Act. With Section 31 being prejudice based qualified exemptions there is a requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused in confirming or not whether the information is held as well as considering the public interest.

Factors for Withholding

- Extreme prejudice to the NIAS operations which would be caused by any malicious action taken against the NIAS IT systems if the information is software in use within NIAS for example on monitoring of web filtering
- It could identify vulnerable computer systems thus allowing someone to compromise our systems, website and potentially allow access to personal data
- Disclosure of the information must be access as disclosure to the wider public and not just to you for personal use
- Prejudice to the public of Northern Ireland which could result from this ie failure to deliver emergency service
- Impact on public trust and security.



Factors for Disclosure

- Openness and transparency regarding the use of public monies and how NIAS protects its IT network capabilities. To confirm what processes we use to protect computer systems would enable the general public to hold NIAS to account ensuring all such breaches are recorded and investigated appropriately.

Balancing Test

NIAS operates the majority of its services with a high dependency on IT to operate its Emergency and Non-Emergency Control Centres. An interruption of these systems, even for short period of maintenance, has considerable implications for the operation of responding to an emergency or transporting a patient. To identify any weaknesses in processes associated to information technology and security would risk undermining the integrity of NIAS information security.

I have therefore concluded that the exemption applies and that withholding the material serves the public interest better than release in this instance.

I hope the above fully assists you.

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.

Yours sincerely
(not signed – issued by email)

Information Governance Team