



11 January 2024

Email:

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Request No: 22114-23
Subject: ICT Infrastructure/Equipment Information
Date Received: 11/10/2023
Date of Monitoring: 12/10/2023

Thank you for your request for information received on 11 October 2023 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 and attached. The Trust would fully apologise for the delay in the provision of a partial response.

Please refer to the attached partial response.

We Trust handled your request in line with your rights under section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). However, information has been withheld from release and the Trust would rely in Section 38 of the FOIA.

Section 38 states that:

- (1) Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to –
 - (a) Endanger the physical or mental health of any individual, or
 - (b) Endanger the safety of any individual.
- (2) The duty to confirm or deny does not arise if, or to the extent that, compliance with section 1(1)(a) would, or would be likely to, have either of the effects mentioned in subsection (1).

The Trust would reply on 38(1)(a) above. The Trust believes this information would be of use to perpetrators and the impact of such an attack would be substantially detrimental for patients and clients. This is a qualified exemption and so a public interest test was carried out to decide if the information should be released or not. Having considered the factors for and against release, the Trust has decided to withhold information as the disclosure of such information would increase the likelihood of endangerment to the physical or mental health of any individual.



EXEMPTION CLAIMED IN RESPECT OF SECTION 38 (1) (a)	
HEALTH AND SAFETY	
In favour of disclosure of information	In favour of maintaining exemption and not disclosing information
The Trust's desire for openness, fairness, transparency and equity.	There have been a number of cyber-attacks against health care and public sector organisations across the UK and ROI, which demonstrates a strong risk to the NIAS ICT Systems.
Transparency in accountability of public funds and ensure public money is being used effectively. Provide assistance to the public in understanding where and how public monies are spent.	The Trust holds highly sensitive information on our patients and clients and the loss (even temporarily) of this information would impact on the Trust's ability to deliver services and provide medical and social care.
To ensure procurements and contracts are conducted and managed in an open and honest way.	There would be a detrimental impact on the mental health and wellbeing of our clients (and patients) if there data was compromised or stolen.
Ensuring there is competition for public sector contracts.	The Trust may be liable to regulatory action or a monetary penalty if information was released into the public domain (via FOIA) which contributed to identifying vulnerabilities in our ICT systems and ultimately led to or contributed to remote cyber-attack.
	Release of the information in light of the potential impact may undermine public confidence in the Trust.
	A potential cyber-attack will endanger the Trust's wider ICT systems, further compromising its ability to deliver services.
	A Cyber-attack may impact upon other health trusts who use the same regional systems and place supplier/contracting organisations at risk.

This would endanger the information we hold on patients, clients and staff and the loss of this information would directly impact on the physical or mental health wellbeing of patients and clients as the Trust would not have access to key information for the continuity of their care.

We appreciate this may be a disappointing response but I hope our reasoning provided above is clear.

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](http://www.ico.org.uk)

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 @ <http://www.niamb.co.uk>. 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**