

30 May 2024

Access to Instrumental Assessment in Speech and Language Therapy Services

Follow-up Query Received 25/06/2024

Thank you for your reply to our FOI. We had asked for the information to be annotated into specific clinical areas however, as you will see the numbers have been grouped into “all adults” or “all children” and, unfortunately, this is not giving us the figures we asked for.

Response 01/07/2024:

This information is not held centrally and would require retrieval through a manual trawl of records, which would take in excess of 18 hours work. Belfast Trust considers that the cost of retrieving the information would be above the ‘Appropriate Limit’, as defined by the Freedom of Information Act under Section 12. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified as £450 for public authorities such as Belfast Trust. This represents the cost of one or more persons spending 18 hours in determining whether we hold the information, locating, retrieving and extracting this information.

By instrumental assessment, we are referring specifically to VFSS (Videofluoroscopy Swallow Study) and FEES (Fibreoptic Endoscopic Examination of Swallowing).

Question 1 – Within your Trust, do you offer the following types of instrumental assessment? With a ‘yes’ or ‘no’, please indicate which services have access to VFS and /or FEES.

Service area	Access to Videofluoroscopy	Access to Fibreoptic Endoscopic Examination of Swallowing
Adult acute (do not include Learning Disability or head and neck cancer/oncology here) include stroke, dementia, general acute and neuro disability	Yes	Yes
Adult Community (do not include Learning Disability or head and neck cancer/oncology here) include stroke, dementia, general acute and neuro disability	Yes	No
Learning disability	Yes	No

30 May 2024

Paediatrics – acute	Yes	No
Paediatrics – community	Yes -via the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children Acute Paediatric Regional VFS Service	No
Head and Neck cancer / Oncology (acute and community)	Yes	Yes
Other – please specify		

Question 2 – How many assessments for the following have been carried out in your Trust, per calendar year 2019 until 2023? If your Trust provides a regional service, please indicate how many assessments were carried out for both Trust domiciled patients and those patients living outside of the Trust area.

30 May 2024

Service Area	Year	VFSS – within Trust	VFSS – outside of Trust	FEES – within Trust	FEES – outside of Trust
Adult acute (do not include Learning Disability or head and neck cancer here) include stroke, dementia, general acute and neuro disability)	2019	74 total for inside and outside Trust.	Unable to determine	27 outpatient only IP FEES numbers are not collated	N/A
	2020	24 (COVID AGP Restrictions) total for inside and outside Trust	Unable to determine	5 outpatient only IP FEES numbers are not collated	N/A
	2021	98 total for inside and outside Trust	Unable to determine	6 outpatient only IP FEES numbers are not collated	N/A
	2022	81 total for inside and outside Trust	Unable to determine	0 outpatient only IP FEES numbers are not collated	N/A
	2023	211 total for inside and outside Trust	Unable to determine	1 outpatient only IP FEES numbers are not collated	N/A
Adult community (do not include Learning Disability or head and neck cancer here) include stroke, dementia, general acute and neuro disability	2019	Included in numbers above	N/A	Included in numbers above	N/A
	2020	Included in numbers above	N/A	Included in numbers above	N/A
	2021	Included in numbers above	N/A	Included in numbers above	N/A
	2022	Included in numbers above	N/A	included in numbers above	N/A

30 May 2024

	2023	Included in numbers above	N/A	Included in numbers above	N/A
Adult learning disability	2019	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	N/A	N/A
	2020	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	N/A	N/A
	2021	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	N/A	N/A
	2022	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	N/A	N/A
	2023	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	N/A	N/A
Paediatrics – acute	2019	21	78	N/A	N/A
	2020	14 Covid AGP restrictions	56 Covid AGP restrictions	N/A	N/A
	2021	15 Covid AGP restrictions	35 Covid AGP restrictions	N/A	N/A
	2022	31	70	N/A	N/A
	2023	29	113	N/A	N/A
Paediatrics – community	2019	Included in numbers above	Included in numbers above	N/A	N/A
	2020	Included in numbers above	Included in numbers above	N/A	N/A
	2021	Included in numbers above	Included in numbers above	N/A	N/A
	2022	Included in numbers above	Included in numbers above	N/A	N/A
	2023	Included in numbers above	Included in numbers above	N/A	N/A
Head and Neck cancer / Oncology - acute and community	2019	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	127 inpatients only	Unable to determine

30 May 2024

	2020	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	14 inpatients only (COVID AGP Restrictions)	Unable to determine
	2021	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	49 inpatients only (COVID AGP Restrictions)	Unable to determine
	2022	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	67 inpatients only	Unable to determine
	2023	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	77 inpatients only	Unable to determine
Other – please specify Regional Neurosurgery Regional Neurology Regional ICU	2019	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	143 inpatients only	Unable to determine
	2020	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	36 inpatients only (COVID AGP Restrictions)	Unable to determine
	2021	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	72 inpatients only	Unable to determine
	2022	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	92 inpatients only	Unable to determine
	2023	Included in numbers above	Unable to determine	99 inpatients only	Unable to determine

Question 3 – Please indicate which hospital in your Trust area is providing these services.

Hospital	VFS	FEES
Altnagelvin Area Hospital, Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT)	N/A	N/A
South West Acute Hospital, WHSCT	N/A	N/A
Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex, WHSCT	N/A	N/A

30 May 2024

Causeway Hospital, Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT)	N/A	N/A
Antrim Area Hospital, NHSCT	N/A	N/A
Daisy Hill Hospital, Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT)	N/A	N/A
Craigavon Hospital, SHSCT	N/A	N/A
South Tyrone Hospital, SHSCT	N/A	N/A
Lagan Valley Hospital, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT)	N/A	N/A
Ulster Hospital, SEHSCT	N/A	N/A
Downe Hospital, SEHSCT	N/A	N/A
Royal Belfast Hospital, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT)	Yes	Yes
Belfast City Hospital, BHSCT	Yes	Yes
Mater Hospital, BHSCT	Currently being established	Yes
Musgrave Park Hospital, BHSCT	No- accessed on other sites	Yes
Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, BHSCT	Yes	No
Other – please specify	N/A	N/A

30 May 2024

Question 4 – Can all patients (from all service areas outlined in question 1) in your Trust area access instrumental assessment if clinically indicated?

Yes

Question 5 – If instrumental assessment is not available to patients within all service areas (listed in question 1) / hospitals, do you have a process in place to refer patients to other hospitals within your Trust?

Yes

N/A for RBHSC patients.

Question 6 – If instrumental assessment is not available to patients within all service areas (listed in question 1) / hospitals, do you have a process in place to refer patients to other hospitals outside of your Trust?

N/A

Question 7 – If your Trust is not able to offer instrumental assessment within all service areas, what steps have been taken to manage the risks of not having adequate instrumental assessments available for those service users where it is clinically indicated?

N/A

Actions	Yes	No
Risk assessment/ inclusion on risk register		No
Business case to increase provision/ develop a service.		No
Exploring alternative means of accessing instrumental assessment including outside the Trust.		No
Reliance on one form of instrumental assessment when another is clinically indicated but not available e.g., use of Videofluoroscopy when FEES would be indicated as more clinically appropriate.	Yes – reliance of OP VFS for community, ALD and OP services while awaiting re-establishment of regular Trust Adult FEES OP clinic for	

30 May 2024

Clinical Swallowing Assessment only		
Other – please comment.		

Question 8 - If your Trust is not able to offer instrumental assessment within all service areas, please indicate any challenges to provision of instrumental assessment in your Trust?

N/A

Is this a challenge?	Yes	No
Funding – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff (SLT, admin and/or radiology to organise and run clinics, provide governance) • Training (including ongoing training needs once clinic established to ensure pipeline of trained professionals) 	N/A Training for both procedures is lengthy.	
Access to training for SLT staff	N/A	
Access to training for Radiology staff	N/A	
Timetabling. i.e., availability of clinic and staff	N/A	
Necessary equipment	N/A	
Other – please specify.		