

19 August 2025

Digital Pathology for Histology Diagnostic Services

We would like to make a request under the FOI Act for information spanning the financial years ending 2021 to 2025

Please provide the following information relating to the Trust move towards Digital Pathology for its Histology Diagnostic Services

- 1. How many WSI (whole slide imaging) slide scanners does the Trust have installed in its Pathology Departments to digitise Histopathology slides**
- 2. Please state in which year each of the scanners was purchased & Installed**
- 3. Please state if the method of acquisition was Capital Purchase, Lease or acquired using a Managed Service Contract.**
- 4. If possible, please state the total capital amount invested by the Trust in their scanners for the periods requested**
- 5. Please state the brand and model of each scanner**
- 6. Please state which Image Manage System (IMS) is used with the scanners**
- 7. Please state what percentage of diagnostic cases were digitised in the last full year**
- 8. If not 100% were specific subspecialties digitised?**
- 9. Do the Trust employed Histopathologists report from a Trust site or do they report from a remote site (e.g. home) or a hybrid model. Please state numbers**
- 10. Is there any plan to purchase and add to the number of scanners already installed in the Trust in the current and next financial years**

FOI requests seeking information regarding core digital infrastructure incl hardware, software, systems, designs, processes, planning, resourcing, risks, existing contracts and security incidents.

Disclosure of information about Belfast Trusts core digital infrastructure would put the Trusts digital infrastructure under elevated levels of security risk and become more vulnerable to a malicious cyber security attack.

The disclosure of such information would:

- a) leave Belfast Trust, Patients, Clients & Staff more vulnerable to crime (Section 31);

19 August 2025

b) Pose a significant threat to the integrity & operation of the digital systems on which the day-to-day business of the Trust relies (Section 43).

Exemptions applied:

Section 31 – Law Enforcement

Section 31(1)(a) states that information is exempt if its disclosure is likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime. ICO guidance states that this can be used to protect information on a public authority's systems which would make it more vulnerable to crime. It can be used by a public authority that has no law enforcement function:

- To protect the work of one that does
- To withhold information that would make anyone, including the public authority itself, more vulnerable to crime

Section 43 – Commercial Interests

Section 43(2) states that information is exempt if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).

Disclosure of the requested information would leave the Belfast Trusts digital infrastructure at significant risk of cyber security attack. This would compromise the Belfast Trusts ability to provide Health & Social Care Services and carry on business-as usual should the digital systems be compromised.

Outcome

There is an overwhelming public interest in keeping Health & Social Care digital systems and critical national infrastructure secure which would be served by non-disclosure. This outweighs the public interest in accountability and transparency which would be served by disclosure.