

5 December 2025

Waiting List Statistics & Demographics in Orthopaedic and Rheumatology Services

I am writing to make a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to better understand the current provision and delivery of orthopaedic and rheumatology services in Northern Ireland. We are seeking up-to-date information regarding HSC waiting lists for orthopaedic and rheumatology services within the Belfast Trust, as follows:

1. Inpatient and Day Case Waiting Lists

The number of people currently on the waiting list for orthopaedic and rheumatology surgery (Inpatient or Day Case) within the Belfast Trust. We would appreciate figures for the last four quarters, i.e. April to June 2025; January to March 2025; October to December 2024 and July to September 2024

The number of patients (Inpatient or Daycase) on the waiting list at the end of each of the last 4 Quarters.

Number of Patients on Inpatient & Daycase Waiting List at Quarter Ending				
Specialty	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25
Orthopaedic Service	13556	12962	12946	12981
Rheumatology Service	1345	1342	1364	1396

2. Outpatient Waiting Lists

The number of people currently waiting for a first outpatient appointment with a consultant relating to orthopaedics and rheumatology within the Belfast Trust. Please provide figures for the last four quarters, i.e. April to June 2025; January to March 2025; October to December 2024 and July to September 2024.

The number of patients on the New Consultant Led Outpatient waiting list at the end of each of the last 4 Quarters.

Number of Patients on Outpatient Waiting List at Quarter Ending				
Specialty	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25
Orthopaedic Service	13110	13808	14574	15045
Rheumatology Service	5391	5309	4843	4563

5 December 2025

3. Diagnostics Related to Orthopaedics and Rheumatology

The number of patients currently waiting for diagnostic tests (including imaging) related to orthopaedic and rheumatoid conditions within the Belfast Trust, covering the last three quarters, i.e. April to June 2025; January to March 2025; October to December 2024 and July to September 2024.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust cannot provide information relating to the specific condition for which the diagnostic test has been requested. This information is not held centrally. To obtain it would require a manual trawl of individual patient records, which would involve more than 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.

4. Demographics of Waiting Lists

The most recent data from the last four quarters, i.e. April to June 2025; January to March 2025; October to December 2024 and July to September 2024 on the longest waiting lists across the Belfast Trust, specifically:

a. The number of patients waiting longer than four years for treatment of arthritis and rheumatoid conditions.

No patients were waiting over 4 years for an Inpatient or Daycase admission for Rheumatology.

5 December 2025

b. Please provide a demographic breakdown of the patients, including age, gender and ethnicity.

The number of patients on the New Consultant Led Outpatient waiting list at the end of each of the last 4 Quarters waiting over 4 years waiting for a Rheumatology Appointment.

Number of Patients Waiting over 4 years on Rheumatology Outpatient Waiting List at Quarter Ending								
	Sep-24		Dec-24		Mar-25		Jun-25	
Age Group	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
0-15	17	<10	17	<10	12	<10	12	<10
16-34	717	232	726	219	643	198	630	201
35-64	2153	779	2096	780	1810	668	1742	616
65-84	310	147	309	139	256	115	242	115
85+	16	<10	17	<10	17	<10	12	<10
Grand Total	4379		4312		3728		3577	

Note: Information has been sourced from the Belfast Trust Encompass Information system. Breakdown by ethnicity is not available.