

12 May 2026

GP locum, partnership, recruitment and workforce

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I request disclosure of the following information relating to general practice workforce and recruitment in Northern Ireland:

1) The number of GP locum opportunities available in each Health and Social Care Trust area, broken down annually from 2017 to date.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust does not hold information on GP locum opportunities across Trust areas.

GP locums and GP partners generally operate as independent contractors rather than Trust-employed staff. As such, information relating to GP locum opportunities, availability, is not held within central Trust workforce systems.

This information may be held by regional or commissioning bodies rather than individual HSC Trusts.

2) The number of such locum opportunities that were filled and/or offered to practitioners in the same period.

As per question one.

3) The number of GP partnership vacancies advertised or available, broken down by Trust area, annually from 2017 to date.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust does not hold information relating to GP partnership vacancies.

GP partnerships are independent contractor arrangements and are not advertised by the Trust.

4) Any data held in relation to trends in GP recruitment, including (if available):

**numbers entering partnership
numbers working as locums
any recorded shortages or workforce gaps.**

While the Trust does not employ GP locums or hold information on GP partnerships, the Trust does hold limited information relating to GP Out of Hours (GPOOH) services, where GPs are engaged as sessional workers. These engagements are not locum arrangements in the traditional sense.

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Based on Trust-held records from Medical Workforce, the number of new starts to sessional GP contracts within GPOOH is as follows:

Year	New Starts – Sessional GP (GPOOH)
2017	2
2018	3
2019	18
2020	36
2021	19
2022	17
2023	29
2024	35
2025	13
Total	172

Further context:

The Trust currently has 169 sessional GPs contracted within the GPOOH service. There are less than five GPs engaged via an agency working within Urgent Care Centres (UCC).

This is the only Trust-held GP-related workforce information relevant to the request.

5) Any reports, briefings, or internal analyses held by the Department concerning GP recruitment trends and/or availability of locum or partnership opportunities since 2017.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust does not hold departmental or regional reports, briefings, or analyses on GP recruitment trends, locum availability, or GP partnerships.

Such information, where it exists, is likely held by regional or departmental bodies rather than individual HSC Trusts.

Where possible, I request that this information be provided in electronic format.

If any part of this request is considered too broad, I would be grateful if you could advise how it may be refined.

In accordance with section 1(1) (a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, we confirm that Belfast Health and Social Care Trust does not hold the information requested.

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In accordance with section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Trust has a duty to provide advice and assistance so far as it is reasonable to do so. Where we do not hold the information requested, we have sought to advise you of alternative organisations that may be able to assist.

The information requested may be held by Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA). You may wish to submit your request, further information about NIMDTA and contact details can be found at:

<https://www.nimdtg.gov.uk>

Tel: 028 9040 0000

Email: reception.nimdtg@hscni.net

**Where numbers are low we have put <5 rather than state the actual figure. To ensure that patient remain non identifiable. Disclosure of this information would breach the first data protection principle, which relates to the fair and lawful processing of personal data. Therefore, we have concluded that this information is exempt from disclosure under Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act - Personal Information relating to a third party.*