

4 June 2026

Intellectual Disability Out-of-Jurisdiction Placements

I write to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

This request relates to statements made by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust indicating that there is a shortage of community placements in Northern Ireland for individuals with a learning disability, and that some service users have been placed in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland as a result.

Please provide the following information for the period 1 January 2020 to the present date:

1. Out-of-Jurisdiction Placements

- The number of individuals ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland who have been placed by the Trust in:
 - (a) Great Britain; and
 - (b) the Republic of Irelanddue to a lack of suitable community placements within Northern Ireland.
- A breakdown of these figures by year.

Belfast Health & Social Care Trust (BHSCCT) can confirm, from 2020 to the present date, there have been zero out of jurisdiction placements for Learning Disability service users.

As a result, there is no information held in relation to the scope of this question.

In accordance with Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this information is not held.

2. Current Position

- The current number of individuals placed outside Northern Ireland by the Trust for the above reason.
- The categories of need for these individuals (e.g. learning disability, autism, acquired brain injury, complex behavioural needs).

Please refer to Question 1.

3. Waiting Lists and Unmet Need

- The number of individuals currently awaiting a community placement in Northern Ireland.

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Learning Disability Commissioned Services have a monthly Accommodation Meeting, and we record details of all service users who require a Nursing, Residential and Supported Living placements.

The number of service users on the current waiting list are as follows:

Supported Living placement - 27
Nursing – <5
Residential – 14

This figure changes frequently, because placements are secured and service users come off the waiting list and new referrals are added. In some cases, service users are referred for future planning and when a placement is offered, it is declined because the service user and/or the family is not ready to make the move.

Some figures have been withheld and replaced with less than five (<5). This is because disclosure of small numbers may risk identifying individuals. The information is therefore exempt under Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Personal Information relating to a third party. Its release would contravene the data protection principles set out in the UK GDPR.

The number of Learning Disability service users awaiting a community placement is

- **The average waiting time for such placements.**

Waiting times for a Learning Disability community placement vary depending on an individual's assessed needs, the availability of suitable accommodation, and whether bespoke housing and/or support packages are required.

Some individuals may access an appropriate placement within a few months of referral, while others may experience more prolonged waiting times due to the complexity of their needs and limited availability of suitable provision. BHSCT does not hold centrally collated data on the average waiting time for community placements.

In accordance with Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this information is therefore not held.

- **Any internal assessments or reports identifying unmet need in community placements.**

BHSCT does not currently maintain a consolidated dataset or formal report specifically quantifying unmet need for Learning Disability community placements in the format requested.

Where assessments of need are undertaken, these are completed on an individual, case-by-case basis as part of clinical and social care planning, rather than compiled into a single report.

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Therefore, under Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, confirms that this information is not held in a reportable format.

However, BHSCT recognises the importance of this information and is progressing work to improve data collection and reporting in this area going forward, in line with service planning and governance requirements.

4. Capacity and Availability

- The total number of supported living/community placements commissioned by the Trust in Northern Ireland.

BHSCT Learning Disability Service currently commissions 203 Supported living placements, 157 Nursing placements, and 112 Residential placements in Northern Ireland.

- Any documented shortfall between required and available placements.

Please refer to Question 3.

- Copies of any capacity reviews, strategic plans, or needs assessments relating to community placements.

BHSCT holds information relevant to this request; however, much of the material relating to capacity reviews and needs assessments is specific to individual service users.

Disclosure of this information would include personal data relating to identifiable individuals. Releasing such information would contravene the data protection principles set out in the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Accordingly, this information is exempt from disclosure under Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Personal Information), as its release would be unfair and unlawful.

5. Policy and Decision-Making

- Any policies, guidance, or criteria used by the Trust when deciding to place an individual outside Northern Ireland.

- Any equality or human rights impact assessments carried out in relation to such placements.

With regard to Policy and Decision Making please refer to the attached document Non-Acute ECR Processes – Information for Clinical Teams.

(36862 FOI Request Intellectual Disability Out-of-Jurisdiction Placements_Attachment 1)

Please note this document has been redacted and individual names have been removed. Disclosure of this information would include personal data relating to

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identifiable individuals. Releasing such information would contravene the data protection principles set out in the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Accordingly, this information is exempt from disclosure under Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Personal Information), as its release would be unfair and unlawful.

6. Costs

- The average annual cost per individual of out-of-jurisdiction placements compared with equivalent placements within Northern Ireland.

Please refer to Question 1.

7. Reviews and Outcomes

- Any reviews, audits, or evaluations conducted regarding:**
 - the impact of out-of-jurisdiction placements on service users;**
 - efforts to repatriate individuals back to Northern Ireland.**

Please refer to Question 1.

If any of this information is held by another body but accessible to the Trust, please advise accordingly.

If any part of this request is considered too broad, I would be grateful if you could assist in refining it in line with your duty under Section 16 of the Act.

Please provide the information in electronic format.