

20 July 2026

## **MRI scanner provision and helium use**

**I would like to make a Freedom of Information request regarding MRI scanners and helium use across your organisation.**

**I am carrying out research to better understand how helium is used in MRI systems across the UK healthcare sector. To estimate this, I am looking to understand where MRI scanners are located, how many are in use, what type/model of systems they are, and how frequently they are used.**

**Please could you provide the following information for all MRI scanners currently operated by, or used by, your organisation:**

**1. The hospital/site where each MRI scanner is located.**

This information is exempt under Section 31(1)(a) – Prevention or detection of crime. Please see footnote.

**2. The number of MRI scanners at each hospital/site.**

This information is exempt under Section 31(1)(a) – Prevention or detection of crime. Please see footnote.

**3. Whether each scanner is fixed, mobile or operated through a managed/third-party service.**

All MRI scanners currently operated by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSC) are fixed installations; there are no mobile MRI scanners operated directly by the Trust. BHSC does, however, have a contractual arrangement with a third-party service provider for the provision of a mobile MRI scanner. The operation and management of this mobile scanner are the responsibility of the third-party provider

**4. The manufacturer and model of each scanner, where available.**

This information is exempt under Section 31(1)(a) – Prevention or detection of crime. Please see footnote.

**5. Whether each scanner is a conventional helium-cooled system, low-helium system, zero boil-off / helium-recirculating system, or helium-free system, where known.**

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For each scanner we would have various systems including conventional helium-cooled system, zero boil-off / helium-recirculating system, or helium-free system.

**6. The number of MRI scans/examinations carried out in the latest available year, broken down by hospital/site if available.**

Please find below a summary of MRI examinations undertaken during the period 01/04/25–31/03/26.

|       |     |        |
|-------|-----|--------|
| RVH   | MRI | 11,483 |
| BCH   | MRI | 12,920 |
| MPH   | MRI | 10,066 |
| MIH   | MRI | 4,275  |
| RBHSC | MRI | 3,351  |
| Total |     | 42,095 |

\*\* An extra 1,361 exams were undertaken via in-house additionality under the Waiting List Initiative \*\*

Footnote: Where Section 31(10(a) has been applied

**Section 31(1)(a) – Prevention or detection of crime**

**1) Engagement of the exemption**

Section 31(1)(a) has been applied because disclosure of detailed asset, location and lifecycle information for essential clinical imaging equipment would be likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime. In particular, such disclosure would materially assist cyber-enabled crime by supporting reconnaissance, targeting of known vulnerabilities, and social-engineering against the Trust and its suppliers.

The requested information functions as a detailed asset register, identifying what equipment exists, where it is located, its age and its supply-chain context. Once disclosed under FOIA, such information would be available without restriction and could be combined with other sources to increase the likelihood and impact of cyber-enabled crime, including ransomware and supplier impersonation.

A narrative-only disclosure meets the public interest in assurance and transparency while avoiding a disproportionate increase in cyber-security risk, consistent with ICO guidance on Freedom of Information and cyber security.