

8 July 2026

Ethics and Medical Device Procurement

This is a Freedom of Information request. With respect to your organisation:

- 1. Please provide the date when your medical device (as defined by MHRA, i.e. also including relevant software) procurement policy (or policies, if you e.g. have a separate one for medical software) was / were last updated.**

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust does not have a specific policy on medical device procurement but this matter is addressed within the Trust's wider Medical Devices Procedures and Guidelines, which was last updated in July 2022 and is currently under review.

- 2. Please state whether the policy (mentioned in point 1 above) requires that a clinical ethicist should be consulted during purchase decisions (if a clinical ethicist is only needs to be consulted under certain conditions, please list these). A clinical ethicists is defined as a member of your clinical ethics committee (under whatever name it operates in your organisation, but this does not include research ethics committees) or an academic with a dedicated post in ethics or a permanent staff member explicitly employed to provide clinical ethics support.**

Belfast Trust's Medical Devices Procedures and Guidelines do not make specific reference to requiring consultation with a clinical ethicist during the equipment procurement phase. However, the guidance does recommend liaison and consultation with a range of support services during the procurement process.

- 3. If the policy requires ethical issues to be considered during such devise purchase decisions, but not via input of a clinical ethicist as defined above, please state the mechanisms in place for fulfilling that requirement.**

Belfast Trust's Medical Devices Procedures and Guidelines do not specifically require ethical issues to be considered during device purchase decisions.

- 4. Please state whether you had clinical ethicist (as defined above) involvement in the purchase of any clinical artificial intelligence applications irrespective of whether this is mandated by your policy.**

Decisions on procurement of medical devices including clinical artificial intelligence applications are often made at a local level throughout the Trust's wide-ranging service areas.

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It would take in excess of 18 hours work to determine whether specific information is held in each of these areas regarding any involvement of a clinical ethicist in previous procurement processes, and to locate, retrieve, and extract information from any such records in order to respond to this request for information.

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.