

28 August 2026

Autism NI Impact Award for Belfast Trust Laboratories

Please treat this as a separate request for recorded information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 concerning the Autism NI Impact Award achieved by Belfast Trust Laboratories.

It is also separate from any correspondence I may have directly with Autism NI as the organisation operating the Impact Award programme.

Autism NI confirmed in writing in April 2025 that the organisation had achieved the Impact Award in March 2025; that organisations achieving the Award complete staff training and create and implement an action plan; and that there were named Impact Award representatives within the Laboratories.

I therefore seek the Trust's own recorded corporate information concerning the programme, its implementation, assessment, assurance and subsequent monitoring.

This request does not seek personal employment or medical records, nor the identity of employees who raised confidential concerns. Personal data may be redacted while the corporate/process information is disclosed.

1. AWARD IDENTITY, SCOPE AND RESPONSIBLE ROLES

Please provide:

(a) the internal project, programme or initiative title and any BHSC/T/BL reference used for the Autism NI Impact Award;

(b) the dates of:

- registration or commencement;
- staff training;
- development and approval of the action plan;
- implementation activity;
- evidence submission;
- assessment;
- award decision; and
- notification/announcement of achievement;

(c) the laboratories, disciplines, sites, directorates, services and staff groups covered by the Award and any areas expressly excluded;

28 August 2026

(d) any record defining whether the Award related to Belfast Trust Laboratories generally, particular laboratory services, particular sites or particular staff groups;

(e) the duration of the Award, review/reaccreditation arrangements, expiry or renewal arrangements and any conditions applying to continued use of the Award status or logo; and

(f) the job titles, teams and functions of the BHSCT/BTL personnel responsible for:

- leading the programme;
- liaising with Autism NI;
- arranging training;
- preparing the action plan;
- implementing actions;
- gathering evidence;
- submitting evidence;
- monitoring implementation; and
- providing post-award assurance.

Names are not required where disclosure of job title/function is sufficient.

2. GOVERNING PROGRAMME DOCUMENTS

Please provide:

(a) any proposal, agreement, purchase order, commissioning document, programme specification, service agreement or equivalent record governing BHSCT/BTL participation in the Autism NI Impact Award;

(b) any criteria, checklist, guidance, framework or programme documentation supplied by Autism NI and held by BHSCT;

(c) any internal BHSCT briefing, project-initiation document, implementation plan or management approval relating to participation in the Award;

(d) the cost to BHSCT/BTL of participation, including training, assessment, consultancy, accreditation or related expenditure, together with the relevant cost centre or funding source where recorded; and

(e) any procurement, approval or financial-authorisation record relating to participation in the programme.

3. TRAINING

Please provide:

(a) the training plan and timetable;

(b) the titles/descriptions of training provided;

28 August 2026

- (c) the staff groups or organisational areas expected to undertake the training;**
- (d) aggregate numbers invited, registered and/or completing training, broken down by broad staff group or service where held;**
- (e) any training materials, slides, workbooks, guidance or supporting resources retained by BHSCT;**
- (f) any evaluation, feedback or assessment of the training's effectiveness; and**
- (g) any recorded decision concerning staff or organisational areas which were not included in the training.**

No individual attendee names are requested.

4. ACTION PLAN

Please provide:

- (a) every substantive version of the Autism NI Impact Award action plan held by BHSCT/BTL;**
- (b) the final action plan submitted or relied upon for Award purposes;**
- (c) any action-plan tracker showing:**
 - action;**
 - responsible owner;**
 - target date;**
 - completion status;**
 - evidence relied upon; and**
 - outstanding or delayed action;**
- (d) records identifying how proposed actions were selected;**
- (e) records identifying whether actions were based on:**
 - employee feedback;**
 - autistic/neurodivergent staff feedback;**
 - complaints or concerns;**
 - Occupational Health advice;**
 - equality/disability information;**
 - staff survey results;**
 - audit findings;**
 - management observations; or**
 - recommendations from Autism NI;**
- (f) records showing amendments made to the action plan during implementation or following assessment; and**

28 August 2026

(g) any outstanding, deferred, partially completed or subsequently withdrawn action.

5. EVIDENCE SUBMITTED TO SUPPORT ACHIEVEMENT OF THE AWARD

Please provide the evidence pack, implementation return, evidence matrix or equivalent material supplied to Autism NI or retained internally to demonstrate completion of the Award requirements.

This should include, where held:

- policies;
- procedures;
- staff communications;
- training evidence;
- workplace-adjustment examples;
- accessibility changes;
- communication changes;
- environmental/sensory changes;
- recruitment/onboarding measures;
- staff-support measures;
- consultation evidence;
- photographs or other implementation evidence;
- evaluation information; and
- evidence of completion against individual action-plan items.

Where personal information appears within such evidence it may be redacted.

6. ASSESSMENT AND AWARD DECISION

Please provide:

- (a) assessment checklists or scoring documents;
- (b) assessor comments;
- (c) assessor questions or requests for clarification/additional evidence;
- (d) BHSCT/BTL responses;
- (e) recommendations;
- (f) identified deficiencies or incomplete actions;
- (g) corrective actions required;
- (h) conditions, reservations or limitations associated with the Award;
- (i) the formal award/approval notification; and

28 August 2026

(j) any record explaining why the programme was considered to have met the required standard.

7. EMPLOYEE CONSULTATION AND AUTISTIC/NEURODIVERGENT EMPLOYEE VOICE

Please provide:

- (a) staff-engagement or consultation plans relating to the Award;**
- (b) invitations or communications asking employees to contribute;**
- (c) questionnaires, surveys, focus-group material or consultation tools;**
- (d) anonymised or aggregate employee-feedback summaries;**
- (e) records showing whether autistic or otherwise neurodivergent employees were specifically consulted;**
- (f) records showing whether Occupational Health, Equality, HR/OD, trade unions, disability networks, staff networks or other employee representatives contributed;**
- (g) records explaining how BHSCT assured itself that the measures represented as operating in practice were effective for autistic employees;**
- (h) records explaining what assurance method was used if direct confidential feedback from autistic employees was not obtained; and**
- (i) any procedure for dealing with adverse or materially contrary employee evidence before or after the Award.**

8. RECORDED INCIDENTS, COMPLAINTS, CONCERNS AND ADVERSE FEEDBACK RELEVANT TO THE AWARD DOMAINS

For the period 1 April 2024 to 8 August 2026, please provide recorded corporate or anonymised information about complaints, concerns, incidents, grievances, equality/disability issues, reasonable-adjustment concerns or external representations concerning Belfast Trust Laboratories which were materially relevant to the substantive domains represented by the Autism NI Impact Award.

The relevant subject areas are:

- autism or neurodiversity awareness;**
- treatment or inclusion of autistic/neurodivergent staff;**
- reasonable adjustments;**
- communication adjustments;**
- provision of written information;**
- processing-time requirements;**

28 August 2026

- sensory environment;
- quiet-space requirements;
- workplace support;
- recruitment or onboarding of autistic/neurodivergent people;
- access to Occupational Health or other disability support;
- disability-related exclusion;
- disability-related staff feedback;
- implementation of measures represented in the Award action plan; and
- whether represented supports were operating effectively in practice.

This limb does not request names, individual medical details or complete personal case files.

If the Trust already holds an aggregate count of such matters, please provide:

- (a) the total number;
- (b) the number by broad category;
- (c) the number by year; and
- (d) where held, the number arising before and after the March 2025 Award.

If no aggregate count is already held, I do not ask the Trust to create a new statistic.

Instead, please provide a short schedule of responsive records identified through proportionate searches, stating where recorded:

- date or month;
- broad source category, for example employee/staff, management, trade union/staff-side, Occupational Health, Equality, HR, formal grievance/complaint, incident/risk system, regulator/oversight body or other external stakeholder;
- broad subject/category;
- formal route or record type;
- action taken;
- outcome/status; and
- whether the matter was considered in the Impact Award programme, action plan, evidence submission, assessment, post-award monitoring, corrective action or communications with Autism NI.

The identity of an individual who raised a concern is not requested.

9. INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL ESCALATION OF RELEVANT CONCERNS

Please provide recorded corporate information identifying whether any material concern within the categories in section 8 was:

- (a) raised with a BTL programme lead or Impact Award representative;

28 August 2026

- (b) escalated to laboratory management;**
- (c) escalated to HR/OD, Equality, Occupational Health, senior management or another corporate function;**
- (d) entered on a risk, incident, complaint, grievance, raising-concern or improvement system;**
- (e) communicated to Autism NI;**
- (f) communicated to another external organisation, adviser, regulator, commissioner or oversight body; or**
- (g) considered when deciding whether the Trust should continue to describe BTL as having achieved or retained the Impact Award.**

Where responsive corporate correspondence exists, please disclose it subject to lawful redaction.

10. SPECIFIC ASSURANCE ABOUT CONTRARY OR ADVERSE INFORMATION

Please provide any recorded policy, procedure, criterion, instruction or decision showing what BHSC/BTL was expected to do if information became available which was materially inconsistent with the Award action plan or with representations that autism-inclusive supports were operating effectively.

Please provide any records showing:

- whether such information was required to be notified to Autism NI;**
- whether the action plan was required to be reviewed;**
- whether corrective action was required;**
- whether post-award assurance could be reopened;**
- whether award status could be qualified, reviewed, suspended or withdrawn;**
- and**
- whether any such mechanism was actually used in relation to BTL.**

11. POST-AWARD MONITORING AND CONTINUING ASSURANCE

Please provide records from the March 2025 Award to 8 August 2026 concerning:

- (a) post-award monitoring;**
- (b) review meetings;**
- (c) updated or revised action plans;**
- (d) implementation trackers;**

28 August 2026

- (e) follow-up training or support;**
- (f) effectiveness reviews;**
- (g) staff feedback;**
- (h) management reviews;**
- (i) lessons learned;**
- (j) corrective actions;**
- (k) communications with Autism NI about continuing implementation;**
- (l) renewal/reaccreditation activity; and**
- (m) any decision to continue, promote, renew, qualify, suspend or cease use of the Award status.**

12. COMMUNICATIONS WITH AUTISM NI

Please provide substantive correspondence, meeting notes and recorded communications between BHSCT/BTL and Autism NI from 1 January 2024 to 8 August 2026 concerning:

- participation in the Award;**
- programme scope;**
- training;**
- the action plan;**
- implementation;**
- evidence submitted;**
- assessment;**
- employee consultation;**
- employee feedback;**
- reasonable-adjustment assurance;**
- complaints or concerns relevant to the Award;**
- corrective action;**
- post-award monitoring;**
- review/renewal; and**
- continued use of Award status.**

Routine diary arrangements, duplicates and purely administrative communications may be omitted.

13. PUBLICITY AND REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT THE AWARD

Please provide:

- (a) internal and external communications announcing or promoting achievement of the Award;**

28 August 2026

(b) website, intranet, newsletter, social-media, recruitment or staff-wellbeing material referring to the Award;

(c) records identifying the approved wording which BHSCCT/BTL was permitted or encouraged to use when describing achievement of the Award; and

(d) any later correction, qualification, withdrawal or amendment to those representations.

14. SEARCH LOCATIONS

Please search, as applicable:

- **Belfast Trust Laboratories management;**
- **relevant laboratory disciplines/services;**
- **BTL Impact Award representatives/programme leads;**
- **HR/Organisational Development;**
- **Equality and Diversity;**
- **Learning and Development;**
- **Occupational Health, limited to corporate/non-personal programme material;**
- **Communications;**
- **Procurement;**
- **Finance;**
- **staff-engagement or workforce-improvement repositories;**
- **corporate governance repositories; and**
- **substantive correspondence with Autism NI.**

15. DISCLOSURE FORMAT, REDACTION AND COST CONTROL

Please provide information electronically.

Native-format disclosure is preferred where practicable, together with accessible PDF copies where appropriate.

Personal information about individual employees may be redacted while corporate/process information is disclosed.

For each substantive category said not to be held, please state that expressly.

For withheld information, please identify the exemption relied upon and disclose all reasonably separable material.

Please provide a document schedule stating, where reasonably practicable:

- **date;**
- **title/description;**
- **authoring body/team;**
- **broad document type; and**
- **disclosure status.**

28 August 2026

If section 12 may be engaged, please do not simply refuse the entire request.

Please provide reasonable advice and assistance under section 16, identifying:

- which limb or limbs create the greatest estimated burden;**
- which repositories/date ranges drive that estimate;**
- what information can be disclosed within the appropriate limit; and**
- how the remaining request could be narrowed.**

My priority order, if refinement is necessary, is:

- 1. action plan, evidence pack, assessment and formal Award confirmation;**
- 2. programme criteria and responsible roles;**
- 3. recorded incidents, concerns and adverse feedback relevant to the Award domains;**
- 4. whether those matters were taken into account or communicated to Autism NI;**
- 5. employee consultation and assurance;**
- 6. post-award monitoring;**
- 7. substantive correspondence with Autism NI; and**
- 8. training/procurement/publicity material.**

For the core Award documents, please search without imposing an artificial date restriction.

The stated date periods apply specifically to the concern/feedback and correspondence limbs.

Refusal Notice

Thank you for your request.

Belfast Trust has considered your request and estimates that the cost of complying with it would exceed the appropriate limit prescribed by the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004.

Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides that a public authority is not obliged to comply with a request where the authority estimates that the cost of determining whether the information is held, locating, retrieving and extracting the information would exceed the appropriate limit. For NHS bodies, this limit is £450, representing 18 staff hours at the statutory rate of £25 per hour.

The Trust estimates that responding to this request in its current form would require approximately 68 hours. This estimate arises from the breadth of the request, which spans numerous subject areas, multiple years, several business functions and a wide range of record types. Relevant information may be held across a number of systems and repositories, including but not limited to QPulse, Datix, SharePoint sites, departmental records and correspondence files.

28 August 2026

In particular, a significant proportion of the estimated time relates to:

- identifying and searching records held by multiple service areas and officers;
- locating and reviewing substantial volumes of correspondence and meeting records;
- searching for incident, complaint, concern, consultation and escalation records across different systems; and
- identifying information relevant to the Autism NI Impact Award programme from among wider business records.

Accordingly, Belfast Trust is refusing the request under Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Under Section 16 of the Act, Belfast Trust has considered how it may assist you in refining your request so that information may be provided within the appropriate limit.

The Trust considers that information may be capable of being located, retrieved and extracted within the cost limit if the request is narrowed to one or more of the following categories of records held within QPulse, Datix and SharePoint:

- Procurement records relating to participation in the Autism NI Impact Award programme;
- Programme criteria and responsible roles;
- Training records and materials;
- Action plans;
- Evidence packs or supporting documentation submitted in support of the Award;
- Assessment documentation;
- Formal Award confirmation or notification records;
- Post-award monitoring records;
- Publicity and communications materials relating to the Award; and/or;
- Incident, concern and adverse-feedback records relevant to the Award.

The areas generating the greatest burden are the elements of the request seeking comprehensive searches for correspondence, employee consultation records, complaints, concerns, incident records, escalation records, communications with Autism NI across multiple departments and custodians.

Should you wish to refine your request, a more manageable scope would be to focus on one or more of the categories of records listed above, or on the priority areas identified within your request.

In order to assist you in refining your request, you may wish to seek programme materials, guidance, assessment criteria and other records created and held by Autism NI directly. This may enable you to narrow your request to information specifically held by the Trust relating to its participation in the programme. [Autism NI - Support for individuals, businesses & carers | Autism NI](#)



28 August 2026

We are happy to consider this as a new FOI request if you would like to refine and resubmit.

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which your Freedom of Information (FOI) request has been handled you may wish to complain. You should contact Public Liaison Services, Nore Villa, Knockbracken Health Care Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast, BT8 8BH or alternatively E-mail PublicLiaison@belfasttrust.hscni.net within two months of the date of this response and your complaint will be considered and a response provided usually within 20 working days of receipt.

Should you still be dissatisfied with the outcome, you can proceed to the second review stage by contacting the Information Commissioner, The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, SK9 5AF who will undertake an independent review. It is important to note that if you refer any matter to the Information Commissioner, you will need to show evidence of having gone through the Trust's review process to try to resolve the matter with the Trust in the first instance.