Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
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FOI/38581

5 November 2026

Cloud, Storage and Computers on Wheels (CoW)

Can you please provide an update on your Trust's IT Services, including aspects of Cloud, Storage, and CoW?

The questions are in the attached spreadsheet, which I would be grateful if you could fill in.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has considered each part of your request. We recognise the legitimate public interest in transparency concerning public expenditure, procurement and the management of digital services. However, much of the information requested relates to essential digital infrastructure and services supporting the delivery of essential health and social care services.

Detailed disclosure across the requested categories would, when considered collectively and alongside information already in the public domain, provide an aggregated picture of the Trust's technology estate, which could reveal:

- Important technology and supplier dependencies.
- The products supporting particular infrastructure functions.
- The relative scale or significance of services.
- Potential contract renewal or technology transition periods.
- Elements of the environment that may warrant further hostile research.
- Potential third-party routes into the Trust's infrastructure.
- Information capable of strengthening targeted phishing, impersonation or social-engineering attempts.

Belfast Trust has therefore applied Section 31(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which provides an exemption where disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the prevention or detection of crime.

ICO guidance states that this can be used to protect information on a public authority's systems, which would make it more vulnerable to crime. It can be used by a public authority that has no law enforcement function:

- To protect the work of one that does
- To withhold information that would make anyone, including the public authority itself, more vulnerable to crime.

The Information Commissioner's guidance also recognises that harm may arise through the "mosaic effect", where requested information is combined with other available information to form a broader and potentially harmful picture.

The Trust's response to each question is set out below.

Question 1: Cloud and Hosting Services

You requested supplier names, products or services, contract end dates, annual expenditure, contract length, procurement frameworks and additional information for:

- Managed hosting.
- Managed infrastructure services.
- Enterprise Software as a Service platforms.
- Public cloud services
- Private cloud or virtualisation platforms

Belfast Trust holds information falling within the scope of this question but is withholding the requested detailed information under Section 31(1)(a). Disclosure would identify, or assist in identifying, the suppliers, technologies, hosting arrangements, contractual dependencies and lifecycle position of infrastructure and services supporting Trust operations.

Although individual items of information might appear limited when viewed separately, their combined disclosure would provide a more complete picture of the Trust's core computing environment and its external dependencies. This could assist an individual seeking to identify potential avenues of attack, target relevant suppliers, develop more credible social-engineering approaches, or match particular technologies against known or emerging vulnerabilities.

High-level Assurance:

Belfast Trust manages cloud and hosting services through established procurement, contract-management, information governance and cyber-security arrangements. Services are subject to proportionate assurance and oversight according to their operational criticality and the nature of the information they process.

Question 2: Data Warehouse, Data Lake and Database Services

You requested supplier, product, contract, expenditure, procurement and supporting information relating to:

- Data warehouses and data lakes
- Database software, licences, management, support and monitoring

Belfast Trust holds information falling within the scope of this question but is withholding the requested detailed information Section 31(1)(a). Database and data-management technologies form part of the underlying infrastructure used to store, manage and process organisational information.

Disclosure of products, suppliers, support arrangements, expenditure and contract lifecycles could assist in identifying important data-platform dependencies and potentially vulnerable or approaching-end-of-life technologies. When combined with the other information requested, it could contribute to a broader understanding of the Trust's internal technology environment.

High-level Assurance:

Belfast Trust maintains governance arrangements for the management, support and protection of organisational data platforms. Access to information is managed according to role and operational need, and services are subject to appropriate security, resilience and lifecycle-management arrangements.

Question 3: Datacentres and Storage Services

You requested supplier, product, contract, expenditure, procurement and related information concerning:

- On-premises datacentres and server rooms
- Cloud storage
- Shared storage services
- SAN, NAS and storage-management technologies

Belfast Trust holds information falling within the scope of this question but is withholding the requested detailed information under Section 31(1)(a). Datacentre and storage technologies form part of the Trust's core foundation infrastructure. Disclosure would provide information about where and how organisational data and services are supported, the relevant technology and supplier dependencies, and the lifecycle of those arrangements.

Providing this information alongside the requested cloud, database and network details would materially increase the value of the disclosure for infrastructure reconnaissance. This could assist anyone with malicious intent in identifying likely points of dependency, targeting relevant suppliers or technologies, and developing attacks intended to affect data availability, system access or operational continuity.

High-level Assurance:

Belfast Trust applies proportionate governance, security, resilience and continuity arrangements to the infrastructure used to store and process organisational information. These arrangements include consideration of availability, data protection, recovery and supplier-related risk.

Question 4: Remote Monitoring Solutions

You asked whether the Trust uses remote monitoring solutions and, if so, requested:

- Device types
- Numbers of devices
- Principal suppliers
- Expenditure
- Contract end dates
- Procurement frameworks
- Additional information

You also requested details of any planned implementation within the next two years.

Belfast Trust holds information falling within the scope of this question but is withholding the requested detailed information about the Trust's remote-monitoring estate, including device types, quantities, suppliers, contractual arrangements and future implementation plans, under Section 31(1)(a).

Remote-monitoring services may involve interconnected devices, software, communications services and supplier-supported platforms. Disclosure of the requested information would assist in mapping the scale and composition of that environment and its supporting supply chain. When combined with information about hosting, networking and communications infrastructure, this could increase the risk of targeted cyber activity.

High-level Assurance:

Digital and connected technologies used in support of Trust health and social care services are subject to proportionate clinical, information-governance, technical and cyber-security consideration. Supplier and service risks are considered according to the nature and criticality of the service.

Question 5: Mobile Workstations and Computers on Wheels

You requested information concerning mobile workstations, computers on wheels, medication carts and laptop or tablet carts, including:

- Approximate numbers
- Manufacturers or suppliers
- The types of computing devices mounted
- Whether units are powered or non-powered
- Purchase years
- Expenditure
- Contract details
- Procurement frameworks
- Replacement plans for the next two years

Belfast Trust holds information falling within the scope of this question but is withholding the requested detailed information about quantities, manufacturers, device configurations, purchase years, contractual arrangements and planned replacement activity under Section 31(1)(a).

While some individual elements may appear relatively limited, disclosure of the complete dataset could provide information about the size, composition, age and lifecycle of computing devices used within clinical environments. In combination with the other requested infrastructure information, this would add to the overall picture of the Trust's digital estate and could assist targeted reconnaissance.

To provide appropriate assurance without disclosing detailed lifecycle or estate information, Health and Social Care Northern Ireland (HSCNI) operates a regional programme for the lifecycle management and replacement of core computer devices. Refresh activity is carried out on a planned basis, where justified by operational need and available funding.

Belfast Trust is unable to provide specific quantities, device configurations, purchase profiles or planned replacement figures because this would undermine the purpose of applying the exemption.

Question 6: Network and Communications Services

You requested supplier, product, contract, expenditure, procurement and related information concerning:

- Community of Interest Networks.
- WAN, MPLS, SD-WAN and HSCN connectivity.
- Broadband.
- LAN switching, routing and network hardware.
- Wi-Fi infrastructure.
- Patient or guest Wi-Fi.
- Telephony and Unified Communications.
- Mobile telecommunications.

Belfast Trust holds information falling within the scope of this question but is withholding the requested detailed information under Section 31(1)(a). Network and communications services form part of the foundation infrastructure supporting access to digital systems and the delivery of essential services.

Disclosure would identify, or assist in identifying, the providers, technologies, connectivity arrangements, contract lifecycles and key dependencies associated with the Trust's network and communications environment. It could enable anyone with malicious intent to undertake more focused reconnaissance, identify technologies against which known vulnerabilities could be researched, target third-party providers, or create more convincing phishing and social-engineering approaches.

The risk would be increased by combining this information with the requested cloud, hosting, storage, database and remote-monitoring details.

High-level Assurance:

Belfast Trust's network and communications services are managed through established regional and organisational governance arrangements. Security, availability, resilience and supplier risk are considered according to the criticality of the service, with appropriate monitoring, incident-management and business-continuity arrangements maintained.

Financial Transparency

Belfast Trust recognises the public interest in understanding the overall level of public expenditure associated with Digital Services.

For transparency, the Trust can confirm that Digital Services total expenditure in 2025/2026 was £21,199,014.

This is a high-level figure for Digital Services as a whole. It should not be interpreted as expenditure solely on the services listed in this request, nor does it provide a breakdown by supplier, product, contract or infrastructure category.

A more detailed breakdown is withheld under Section 31(1)(a) where it would contribute to identifying the scale, importance, deployment or dependency associated with infrastructure, services, technologies or suppliers.