

21<sup>st</sup> July 2020

**BY EMAIL**

Our Ref: FOI 1255

Dear 

Your request for information was received on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and was dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Please be advised that the Business Services Organisation (BSO) has now completed its search for the information you requested with regards to a list of GP practices in Northern Ireland and the clinical system they use.

Firstly, please accept my apologies for the delay in providing you with a formal response regarding your request.

Please find this information below:

I must advise you that the information pertaining to clinical systems used by GP Practices in Northern Ireland has been considered exempt from disclosure in line with Section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('Law Enforcement').

I should explain that BSO's Information Technology Service (ITS) has been commissioned to provide ICT shared services to the wider Health and Social Care (HSC). Essential elements of the service include the security of the data held and the protection of the HSC network boundary. Section 31 is also a qualified exemption which means that the public interest test (PIT) must be considered. This involves weighing the harm resulting from possible disclosure against the likely benefit to the wider public.

A copy of PIT is attached for your reference. In considering the PIT, I acknowledge that there may be a public interest for disclosure in line with BSO's requirement to be open and transparent in its use of public monies and provision of public services. However, while I make no suggestion that there is

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any malicious intent on your part; provision (and therefore publication) would be capable of making BSO, and the wider Health and Social Care, vulnerable to malicious attack. I therefore consider that the public interest in withholding this information outweighs the public interest in supplying it.

However, please find below GP Practice information that is already out in the public domain:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/gp-practices>

<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/1816.htm>

I hope that the information provided assists you. If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter.

In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to

Information Governance Manager,  
2 Franklin Street,  
Belfast,  
BT2 8DQ

If, following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision making panel, you remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request, you may make a complaint under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the BSO has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act.

You can contact Information Commissioner at:

**Website:** [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)  
**Phone:** 0303 123 1113  
**Email:** [casework@ico.org.uk](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk)  
**Post:** Information Commissioner's Office  
3rd Floor, 14 Cromac Place  
Belfast  
BT7 2JB

In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out. However the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Yours Sincerely,



**Karen Bailey**  
Acting Chief Executive

## Public Interest Test (PIT)

Exemption claimed in respect of Section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('Law Enforcement') for disclosure of details on clinical IT systems

In considering this PIT, the following have been taken into account:

- the public interest in issues of accountability and transparency and in scrutinising how BSO's affairs are conducted
- the public interest in ensuring that BSO is able to protect its systems from cyber-attacks which could damage security
- the public interest in ensuring that BSO can proactively manage the risks around cyber security, for the wellbeing and safety of all its stakeholders

In favour of disclosure of information	In favour of not disclosing information
<p>Openness and transparency: it is recognised that releasing this information would provide the public with assurance that we are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protecting our technologies;</li> <li>• spending public money responsibly, especially where this relates to the provision of public services</li> </ul>	<p>BSO hosts a vast range of software, systems and data on behalf of the wider Health and Social Care (HSC) within Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Release of this information would make BSO, and by association the wider HSC more vulnerable to crime (namely a malicious attack on BSO's network). As such release of this information would be seen to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime by making BSO more vulnerable to hacking at a given time.</p>
	<p>Under data protection legislation, BSO has a legal obligation to process personal data in a manner that ensures its appropriate security using appropriate technical or organisational measures. The release of this information is therefore a reasonable threat to the security and integrity of confidential personal data held on our systems.</p>
	<p>BSO and the wider HSC operate the majority of their services with a high dependency on IT. Many services operate almost exclusively via information held within our network infrastructure. Any disruption of BSO's network infrastructure, even for a short period would be likely to severely restrict our ability to carry out statutory functions across the wider HSC network.</p>

	<p>There is therefore an overwhelming public interest in keeping BSO's systems secure which would be served by non-disclosure.</p> <p>It has therefore been decided that the balance of the public interest lies clearly in favour of withholding the material on this occasion.</p>
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