

11th January 2021

BY EMAIL

Our Ref: FOI 1401

Dear [REDACTED]

Your request for information was received on 7th January 2021 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 data on prescribing rates and money spent on anti-depressant medication in Northern Ireland for the years 2019 and 2020, and if this data publicly available?

Please find this information, below.

The BSO Family Practitioner Services (FPS) publish the Prescription Cost Analysis (PCA) on an annual basis which is a publicly available source of data on prescribing. Whilst we also produce official statistics on high level prescribing trends for Northern Ireland, these statistics will not drill down to individual therapeutic areas. Please see below for the requisite link:

[FPS Information Unit \(hscni.net\)](https://www.hscni.net/fps)

The Prescription Cost Analysis for 2019 can be found at the below link. To source antidepressant prescribing it is possible to filter the spreadsheet to find the appropriate British National Formulary (BNF) Chapter and Section. The data on Antidepressant prescribing is found under Chapter 4 and Section 3 of the BNF.

The published PCA data contains information on individual preparations (e.g. types of antidepressants) or the "Totals for BNF Section" tab can be used to get a high level figure, figures available would be Prescription Items, Quantity and Ingredient Cost (with definitions available in the user notes).

[Prescription Cost Analysis \(hscni.net\)](https://www.hscni.net/pca)



We can advise that there is a 2 month delay between the processing of prescriptions and the data becoming available for analysis. As such, the 2020 data is not available at this stage. Whilst the date for publication has not as yet been set, we can advise that the usual yearly publication is early March.

If you do require additional information not held in the PCA e.g. patient counts or monthly data, we would recommend submitting a further Freedom of Information request; however at this stage there would only be provision of partial 2020 data.

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
Phone: 0303 123 1113
Email: 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Bailey".

Karen Bailey
Acting Chief Executive