

13th August 2024

BY EMAIL

Our Ref: FOI 2260

Dear [REDACTED],

Your request for information was received on 19th July 2024 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 in relation to anti-depressants/anxiety medication.

I was wondering if BSO can provide a breakdown of the amount of anti-depressant and anxiety related medication sold in Northern Ireland over the past 10 years, broken into each year and showing the amount spent each year?

Does it also provide a breakdown by either constituency or council area to show the amount (and value of anti-depressant and anxiety medication) prescribed in each area over the past 10 years?

If there is an accessible spreadsheet where I can see this myself, I'm happy to look there of you can direct me?

Please find this information attached.

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, as the BSO, along with all other public authorities are not obliged to accept internal review requests after this period has lapsed.

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
Chief Executive

Number of Items for Antidepressants by Practice LGD from 2014/15 to 2023/24										
Practice LGD	Items (14/15)	Items (15/16)	Items (16/17)	Items (17/18)	Items (18/19)	Items (19/20)	Items (20/21)	Items (21/22)	Items (22/23)	Items (23/24)
Antrim and Newtownabbey	163,459	176,116	184,882	192,732	204,492	217,430	224,181	234,761	244,337	253,795
Ards and North Down	199,749	210,299	220,822	230,128	243,604	257,341	263,969	277,954	289,067	299,348
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	293,986	309,252	322,798	333,774	345,719	362,313	371,115	387,646	398,376	410,141
Belfast	656,358	700,881	744,955	772,510	810,946	852,078	872,214	906,432	930,674	961,317
Causeway Coast and Glens	193,096	203,613	212,820	224,694	236,164	251,475	254,539	266,319	277,093	284,327
Derry City and Strabane	268,465	288,957	308,887	324,446	342,401	366,585	382,153	399,030	417,868	439,458
Fermanagh and Omagh	151,268	161,964	169,285	177,274	186,560	196,878	203,794	210,506	218,507	225,668
Lisburn and Castlereagh	128,018	135,157	142,866	149,909	159,296	172,293	177,957	188,178	195,144	200,858
Mid and East Antrim	180,649	191,612	203,607	212,079	223,833	241,301	246,159	256,793	268,737	278,530
Mid Ulster	181,983	191,532	203,214	211,449	220,245	231,587	235,258	243,182	250,457	259,836
Newry, Mourne and Down	237,437	251,737	267,013	278,613	292,077	309,818	319,240	332,712	344,256	354,945
Unknown	1,489	4,862	5,229	2,123	1,101	1,038	10,919	18,256	24,360	29,152
Total	2,655,957	2,825,982	2,986,378	3,109,731	3,266,438	3,460,137	3,561,498	3,721,769	3,858,876	3,997,375

Gross Cost for Antidepressants by Practice LGD from 2014/15 to 2023/24										
Practice LGD	Gross Cost (14/15)	Gross Cost (15/16)	Gross Cost (16/17)	Gross Cost (17/18)	Gross Cost (18/19)	Gross Cost (19/20)	Gross Cost (20/21)	Gross Cost (21/22)	Gross Cost (22/23)	Gross Cost (23/24)
Antrim and Newtownabbey	£ 866,581.74	£ 822,985.57	£ 669,757.75	£ 707,429.93	£ 702,259.39	£ 816,494.84	£ 1,297,037.13	£ 910,345.16	£ 908,036.43	£ 862,344.19
Ards and North Down	£ 1,223,656.51	£ 1,185,297.57	£ 916,278.81	£ 905,267.42	£ 877,953.06	£ 961,173.29	£ 1,491,523.14	£ 1,090,666.59	£ 1,115,012.23	£ 1,031,218.33
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	£ 1,575,102.29	£ 1,513,483.97	£ 1,323,381.56	£ 1,253,757.63	£ 1,201,956.91	£ 1,369,730.48	£ 2,100,505.23	£ 1,453,442.23	£ 1,387,583.12	£ 1,313,806.32
Belfast	£ 3,237,642.85	£ 3,220,286.39	£ 2,733,132.88	£ 2,527,872.42	£ 2,434,280.05	£ 2,828,890.42	£ 4,581,569.29	£ 3,120,164.25	£ 3,033,466.70	£ 2,825,613.62
Causeway Coast and Glens	£ 1,050,030.79	£ 1,003,093.48	£ 768,283.04	£ 809,430.59	£ 810,870.68	£ 966,357.23	£ 1,567,060.30	£ 1,023,023.74	£ 972,139.43	£ 945,912.82
Derry City and Strabane	£ 1,161,071.76	£ 1,212,758.11	£ 1,088,677.13	£ 1,040,787.25	£ 991,460.44	£ 1,165,344.39	£ 2,005,364.05	£ 1,273,933.92	£ 1,172,373.48	£ 1,154,130.56
Fermanagh and Omagh	£ 761,559.79	£ 774,295.56	£ 687,245.32	£ 627,870.17	£ 578,988.47	£ 699,948.78	£ 1,118,252.26	£ 749,375.39	£ 730,498.20	£ 714,673.31
Lisburn and Castlereagh	£ 684,594.19	£ 662,018.79	£ 520,827.53	£ 505,899.36	£ 487,822.63	£ 573,434.86	£ 946,770.46	£ 647,953.99	£ 629,849.86	£ 581,867.22
Mid and East Antrim	£ 1,003,399.64	£ 968,253.40	£ 745,844.91	£ 760,800.01	£ 731,799.44	£ 877,976.06	£ 1,409,989.58	£ 997,465.80	£ 994,792.22	£ 939,603.94
Mid Ulster	£ 995,388.91	£ 981,976.84	£ 867,416.82	£ 765,656.73	£ 743,153.93	£ 886,033.68	£ 1,345,727.77	£ 902,405.12	£ 863,677.69	£ 828,398.66
Newry, Mourne and Down	£ 1,233,863.22	£ 1,226,812.56	£ 1,069,926.98	£ 1,067,320.88	£ 1,003,474.27	£ 1,133,031.32	£ 1,645,461.55	£ 1,139,261.92	£ 1,101,541.16	£ 1,044,566.23
Unknown	£ 8,672.95	£ 15,686.57	£ 12,100.84	£ 6,285.94	£ 3,628.62	£ 3,665.25	£ 21,600.28	£ 16,249.32	£ 17,914.41	£ 19,775.69
Total	£ 13,801,564.63	£ 13,586,948.79	£ 11,402,873.57	£ 10,978,378.32	£ 10,567,647.88	£ 12,282,080.60	£ 19,530,861.02	£ 13,324,287.43	£ 12,926,884.93	£ 12,261,910.88

Number of Items for Other Anti-anxiety Medications by Practice LGD from 2014/15 to 2023/24										
Practice LGD	Items (14/15)	Items (15/16)	Items (16/17)	Items (17/18)	Items (18/19)	Items (19/20)	Items (20/21)	Items (21/22)	Items (22/23)	Items (23/24)
Antrim and Newtownabbey	90,015	93,854	98,705	98,424	101,217	108,373	110,008	110,810	108,228	108,276
Ards and North Down	98,407	102,126	108,815	111,635	112,857	115,252	115,134	115,824	115,213	116,012
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	118,300	122,364	128,547	130,108	130,775	134,954	137,674	139,456	138,704	140,428
Belfast	331,556	346,823	368,521	372,515	376,986	389,413	393,412	392,596	391,633	394,528
Causeway Coast and Glens	97,597	100,204	106,172	110,291	114,116	116,064	116,201	116,466	116,665	117,585
Derry City and Strabane	99,002	101,069	106,837	113,112	116,423	120,441	123,127	123,893	123,983	125,691
Fermanagh and Omagh	59,284	62,731	65,860	68,212	71,504	75,189	78,263	78,028	77,147	76,216
Lisburn and Castlereagh	60,945	62,307	64,759	65,721	66,779	68,763	69,010	70,267	69,913	69,997
Mid and East Antrim	108,522	108,813	111,172	112,045	114,191	118,852	118,738	119,348	117,004	114,618
Mid Ulster	81,131	83,076	87,283	88,188	88,754	92,787	94,392	93,296	91,585	92,412
Newry, Mourne and Down	95,718	97,302	102,739	104,350	104,438	107,619	109,091	111,178	112,234	114,146
Unknown	1,324	7,764	7,656	1,260	815	766	1,745	3,083	3,312	3,882
Total	1,241,801	1,288,433	1,357,066	1,375,861	1,398,855	1,448,473	1,466,795	1,474,245	1,465,621	1,473,791

Gross Cost for Other Anti-anxiety Medications by Practice LGD from 2014/15 to 2023/24										
Practice LGD	Gross Cost (14/15)	Gross Cost (15/16)	Gross Cost (16/17)	Gross Cost (17/18)	Gross Cost (18/19)	Gross Cost (19/20)	Gross Cost (20/21)	Gross Cost (21/22)	Gross Cost (22/23)	Gross Cost (23/24)
Antrim and Newtownabbey	£ 1,667,609.06	£ 1,782,539.48	£ 1,873,067.53	£ 945,874.00	£ 382,093.53	£ 385,224.00	£ 513,730.86	£ 541,411.32	£ 476,275.75	£ 435,801.03
Ards and North Down	£ 2,244,898.34	£ 2,411,160.22	£ 2,588,144.41	£ 1,242,635.39	£ 463,638.66	£ 441,014.50	£ 523,998.31	£ 582,225.04	£ 468,569.47	£ 430,886.95
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	£ 2,236,907.51	£ 2,339,080.83	£ 2,401,132.40	£ 1,306,846.88	£ 530,883.82	£ 491,769.11	£ 583,785.82	£ 602,691.29	£ 493,052.19	£ 449,146.87
Belfast	£ 6,000,809.35	£ 6,303,779.60	£ 6,516,628.62	£ 3,357,448.57	£ 1,467,175.13	£ 1,374,871.95	£ 1,659,663.58	£ 1,717,633.16	£ 1,450,427.87	£ 1,337,538.98
Causeway Coast and Glens	£ 2,042,307.18	£ 2,115,507.92	£ 2,193,537.33	£ 1,135,130.40	£ 462,804.32	£ 413,204.00	£ 500,159.71	£ 501,161.06	£ 396,085.48	£ 381,397.72
Derry City and Strabane	£ 1,634,972.87	£ 1,758,189.57	£ 1,865,521.41	£ 1,132,872.90	£ 486,333.01	£ 446,087.89	£ 627,416.10	£ 693,458.92	£ 554,298.14	£ 525,897.07
Fermanagh and Omagh	£ 1,163,713.96	£ 1,259,558.01	£ 1,326,745.97	£ 790,402.05	£ 314,686.53	£ 289,620.86	£ 391,346.54	£ 437,637.81	£ 345,835.87	£ 304,253.69
Lisburn and Castlereagh	£ 1,206,593.43	£ 1,299,917.32	£ 1,360,341.12	£ 677,343.40	£ 270,529.01	£ 266,075.13	£ 291,993.49	£ 312,886.49	£ 256,044.67	£ 258,044.54
Mid and East Antrim	£ 2,036,049.08	£ 2,172,670.59	£ 2,145,361.98	£ 1,053,892.09	£ 415,197.26	£ 400,281.10	£ 485,510.72	£ 507,848.72	£ 431,198.17	£ 400,751.63
Mid Ulster	£ 1,538,148.09	£ 1,603,731.87	£ 1,695,438.14	£ 952,020.54	£ 360,235.10	£ 320,359.13	£ 439,842.93	£ 462,068.39	£ 350,859.98	£ 319,525.38
Newry, Mourne and Down	£ 1,779,763.48	£ 1,922,022.84	£ 2,014,123.80	£ 1,078,813.28	£ 410,714.52	£ 391,463.25	£ 450,211.52	£ 480,124.92	£ 414,949.27	£ 405,393.10
Unknown	£ 23,257.74	£ 46,091.82	£ 52,593.59	£ 21,638.54	£ 2,761.57	£ 2,046.79	£ 4,187.93	£ 5,656.48	£ 4,436.60	£ 4,741.49
Total	£ 23,575,030.07	£ 25,014,250.08	£ 26,032,636.28	£ 13,694,918.06	£ 5,567,052.47	£ 5,222,017.71	£ 6,471,847.52	£ 6,844,803.62	£ 5,642,033.45	£ 5,253,378.45

Notes - Number of Items and Gross Cost for Antidepressants and Other Anti-anxiety Medications by Practice LGD from 2014/15 to 2023/24

This information has been sourced from the Family Practitioner Services within the HSC Business Services Organisation. The information comes from the Family Practitioner Services Pharmacy Payment System. The data provided covers prescriptions that are prescribed in Northern Ireland by a GP, nurse or any other non-medical prescribers (for example: pharmacists, optometrists) that are subsequently dispensed and submitted to BSO for payment. Data on secondary care prescribing and private prescriptions are not held by the Business Services Organisation. If a patient does not take a prescription to a dispenser and get it provided to them, then the information will not be included in the dataset. Post payment adjustments are included meaning that small differences in the data may be found, depending on when the data is extracted.

Information has been provided for two categories of products. The first category is "Antidepressants" which includes all of the products found in BNF Chapter 4 and Section 3 (Antidepressant Drugs). Please note that antidepressants are used to treat anxiety, as well as depressive illness. The second category is named "Other Anti-anxiety Medications" which includes all of the products in BNF Chapter 4, Section 1 and Paragraph 2 (Anxiolytics) as well as Pregabalin and Propranolol products. Again, it should be noted that Pregabalin products are also used for neuropathic pain and epilepsy while Propranolol products are also used for cardiovascular conditions and migraine.

BSO dispensing data does not capture the indication for which the drug has been prescribed/dispensed. Therefore, there is no way to distinguish the prescribing that is specifically for anxiety from the other potential uses of the drugs.

A prescription item is a single supply of a medicine, dressing or appliance written on a prescription form. For example, if a prescription form includes 3 medicines it is counted as 3 prescription items. Item figures do not provide any indication of the length of treatment or quantity of medicine prescribed.

The Gross Cost is the basic price of a drug i.e. the price listed in the national Drug Tariff, concessionary price lists or in standard price lists and is not necessarily the price that has been paid. It does not take into account any contract prices or discounts, dispensing costs or fees, so the amount that has been paid will be different. In other parts of the UK the equivalent is called the 'Net Ingredient Cost' (or 'NIC') in England and Wales whereas in Scotland this is referred to as the 'Gross Ingredient Cost'.

Please note that costs can vary greatly due to drug price volatility and drugs coming off patent. Examples of this are pregabalin which came off patent in July 2017 (part of the reason for the fall in spending in other anti-anxiety in 2017/18) and sertraline whose price increased considerably in May 2020 (part of the reason for the increase in antidepressant spending in 2020/21).

Prescription information has been assigned to Local Government Districts (LGDs) based on the postcode of the prescribing practice. In some cases, the practice information is not available or can't be matched to an LGD, so this information has been assigned to the "Unknown" category.

If statistics are to be used for comparative purposes to other parts of the UK, differences in prescription dispensing and processing in Northern Ireland compared to other UK regions should be noted: For example in Northern Ireland there is no outpatient dispensing.

Statistics are routinely published on the BSO website relating to General Medical Services, Dental, Ophthalmic, Pharmaceutical Services and Prescribing, available at <https://bso.hscni.net/directorates/operations/family-practitioner-services/directorates-operations-family-practitioner-services-information-unit/>