

Question:

1. How many new pharmacy licences have been granted in NI in the last three year and could you please provide a list of such?
2. Payment to Appliance contracts – how many measuring fees have been claimed in NI by appliance contracts in 2024, please can you break these down per appliance contract.
3. Can you share the application forms for appliance contracts made in the last two years.
4. You reference “neighbourhood” in our conversation, in your experience what would be the “neighbourhood” definition for a pharmacy and in turn what would be the definition for appliance contractor.”

Response:

1. None.
2. SPPG do not have the information to answer this query.
3. Having now had an opportunity to consider your request, and the factors for and against release, I can advise that I am restricted from providing you with the information requested.

The reasons for this decision and the applicable exemption in this instance are set out in appendix 1.

The template form is available on the BSO website [Appliance Contractor Forms - Business Services Organisation \(BSO\) Website](#)

4. The definition of neighbourhood is proposed by the applicant with each application and then is one of the key determinations that is made by the Pharmacy Practice Committee; it will differ with each application.

Appendix 1

Public Interest Test

Section 43 (2) is a qualified exemption and we are required to conduct a public interest test when applying any qualified exemption. This means that after it has been decided that the exemption is engaged, the public interest in releasing the information must be considered. If the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in withholding it then the exemption does not apply and must be release. In the FOIA there is a presumption that information should be released unless there are compelling reasons to withhold it.

Exemption applied:

Section 43 (2) Commercial Interests

Considerations in favour of release

- a) DoH commitment to openness and transparency in its commercial activities
- b) transparency and insight into decision making processes

- c) accountability

Considerations against Release

- a) how it could adversely impact working relationships with contractors and stakeholders etc.
- b) likely to harm or prejudice the commercial interests of our current and potential future contractors
- c) recognition that disclosure is likely to provide information to direct competitors within the market that would create an imbalance and a commercial advantage to those competitors
- d) It is also considered that disclosure would be likely to deter potential future applicants from applying and sharing commercially sensitive information with us.

It was therefore decided that the balance of the public interest lies clearly in favour of withholding the material on this occasion.

Further guidance can be found at:
Section 43 – Commercial interests | ICO

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