

Question:

- 1. Details of any computer systems/software used to raise purchase orders to contractors and suppliers. (Name, how long it has been in use, how it was procured, any routine independent verification that no improper use occurs)*
- 2. Details of how the Department obtains assurance that purchase orders raised to contractors or suppliers using the computer systems/software in the Q1 response, by Trust Estates Departments, are legitimate, that public procurement regulations have been adhered to, and that the works or materials procured have been verified as satisfactorily complete prior to payment.*
- 3. Details of any concerns raised to the Department in relation to the procurement practices of any Trust Estates Department in the past 7 years (nature of the concern, which Trust, follow up actions taken).*

Response:

1. The information requested is not held by the Department of Health. Business Services Organisation (BSO) and/or the Health and Social Care Trusts themselves are best placed to provide the information requested and may be able to assist if you contact them directly:

Belfast HSC: <https://belfasttrust.hscni.net/about/access-to-information/foi/>

Northern HSC: <https://northerntrust.disclosure-log.co.uk/>

Southern HSC: <https://southerntrust.hscni.net/get-in-touch/freedom-of-information-request-form/>

South-Eastern HSC: <https://setrust.hscni.net/contact-us/freedom-of-information/>

Western HSC: <https://westerntrust.hscni.net/contact-us/freedom-of-information-request/>

BSO: <https://bso.hscni.net/freedom-of-information/>

2. The HSC Trusts, BSO (Shared Service Provider) and other Arm's Length Bodies are separate legal entities from the Department. Therefore, detailed assurances about the effectiveness of specific individual systems on a day-to-day basis, are a matter for each organisation's own Chief Executive to secure, in conjunction with their overseeing Boards. BSO Shared Services provides defined corporate services such as Procurement and Logistics Services (PaLS), Counter Fraud and Payments Shared Services to all Health and Social Care (HSC) organisations, including HSC Trusts

Each ALB's Accounting Officer provides written assurance about control within their organisation to the relevant Sponsor Branch in the Department of Health, which coordinates the sponsor relationship, via a Governance Statement. This is published as part of the annual accounts at year end and a Mid-Year Assurance Statement. The Department takes assurance from these statements together with

supplementary sources of assurance such as internal and external audits. Each Accounting Officer is expected to set out any significant ongoing control divergences within their organisation in these written statements.

In relation to whether public procurement regulations have been adhered to, Health Estates (HE), the formally accredited DOH Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE) for construction works and design services, produce the Estates Procurement Manual. This must be complied with by all DoH arm's length bodies. Compliance is monitored annually. Details of this process can be found in Section 2.1 of the Estates Procurement Manual (<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/estates-procurement-manual>).

3. The Raising Concerns process is based on providing a confidential route to alert that something may be of concern. The confidential investigation of those concerns means that we do not disclose information shared with the Department in confidence - Exemption 41 of FOI Act has therefore been applied. Breaching trust regarding the information shared would harm the public interest by discouraging people from reporting wrongdoing if confidentiality in the process is not maintained.