

Question

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I request the following recorded information relating to concerns raised about the clinical practice of **Dr Michael Watt**.

Specifically:

1. The **earliest recorded date** on which the Department became aware of concerns regarding Dr Watt's clinical practice.
2. Copies of all correspondence, emails, briefing notes, internal memoranda, minutes, risk assessments, or incident reports that:
 - Record who first raised concerns;
 - Identify the individual(s) or body/bodies that escalated those concerns;
 - Document how those concerns were categorised (e.g. performance, prescribing, diagnostic practice, governance, etc.).
3. Documentation confirming:
 - Whether the original concern **originated within Northern Ireland**, and if so, from which organisation or individual;
 - If the concern originated outside Northern Ireland, the jurisdiction and source from which it arose;
 - The date on which the Department first became aware of that concern, regardless of jurisdiction.
4. Any documentation clarifying whether concerns originated from:
 - A GP or primary care practitioner;
 - Another consultant or hospital clinician;
 - Internal Trust governance processes;
 - External whistleblowers;
 - Regulatory bodies;
 - Patient complaints;
 - Or any other source.
5. Any discrepancy analysis, briefing material, or explanatory documents prepared for Ministers regarding the timeline of when concerns were first raised versus when the public Neurology Inquiry states concerns emerged.
6. Any internal discussion referencing differences between:
 - The publicly stated timeline of concerns; and
 - The Department's recorded internal awareness of concerns.

For clarity, I am seeking recorded information only. If any information is withheld under exemptions, please specify the exemption relied upon and provide the public interest test reasoning.

Response

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST

I refer to your request regarding the earliest recorded date on which the Department became aware of concerns regarding the former consultant neurologist Michael Watt's clinical practice.

I can confirm that following a search of our electronic records for related documents that an Early Alert is the earliest recorded date on which the Department was first made aware of concerns over the practice of a Consultant Neurologist. The Early Alert was received to the Department from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust on 13 February 2017.

A copy of the Early Alert 16/17 is attached and engages Freedom of Information Section 40(2) (personal data). The Early Alert 16/17 represents the full disclosure of documentation for your request.

Date response issued: 26 March 2026

Reference Number: DOH/2026-0052

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