

# Questions:

## Section A – Current System Landscape

1. The total number of GP practices providing services under the General Medical Services (GMS) scheme, broken down by clinical system provider (e.g. Socrates, HealthOne, or other named system), to the extent this information is held by the HSC.

## Section B – Migration Activity

1. The number of GMS practices that have completed or are in progress of migrating from one clinical system to another during this period, including which provider they migrated from and to.
2. Whether any migration requests have been declined, deferred, or significantly delayed, and the reasons given.

## Section C – Policy and Financial Information

1. Any published policies, criteria, or guidance used by the HSC (or the Primary Care Reimbursement Service) when assessing or supporting GP practice requests to change clinical system provider. A link or reference to existing documentation would suffice.
2. The approximate dates or financial years in which current GP clinical system contracts or agreements are due for renewal.
3. Whether the HSC has allocated specific budgets for GP clinical system migrations or GP IT modernisation during this period, and if so, the total amount.

# Responses:

## Section A – Current System Landscape

1. The Business Services Organisation (BSO) Information Technology Service (ITS) are commissioned to provide ICT services and shared services to the wider Health and Social Care (HSC) including the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) of the DOH. Essential elements of the service include the security of the data held and the protection of the HSC network boundary.

Information pertaining to clinical systems used by GP Practices in Northern Ireland has been considered exempt from disclosure in line with Section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('Law Enforcement'). I refer you to appendix 1 for further detail on the exemption applied.

## Section B – Migration Activity

1. Information pertaining to clinical systems used by GP Practices in Northern Ireland has been considered exempt from disclosure in line with Section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('Law Enforcement'). I refer you to appendix 1 for further detail on the exemption applied.

2. Information pertaining to clinical systems used by GP Practices in Northern Ireland has been considered exempt from disclosure in line with Section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('Law Enforcement'). I refer you to appendix 1 for further detail on the exemption applied.

### **Section C – Policy and Financial Information**

1.
  - New GMS Contract 2003 – Investing in General Practice
  - Standard General Medical Services Contract (NI) – March 2004
2. The financial year in which GP clinical system contracts or agreements are due for renewal is 2030/31.
3. SPPG has taken the decision in this instance to withhold this information via application of Section 43 Part 2 of the Freedom of Information Act - Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it). I refer you to appendix 1 for further detail on the exemption applied.

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**Exemption schedule:**

**Section 31 – ‘Law Enforcement’**

(1) Information which is not exempt information by virtue of section 30 is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice –

(a) the prevention or detection of crime

**Public Interest Test**

Section 31 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 released. In the FOIA there is a presumption that information should be released unless there are compelling reasons to withhold it.

**Considerations in favour of release**

- a) DoH commitment to openness and transparency: it is recognised that releasing this information would provide the public with assurance that we are:
- b) protecting our technologies;
- c) spending public money responsibly, especially where this relates to the provision of public services
- d) accountability

**Considerations against Release**

- a) The Business Services Organisation (BSO) hosts a vast range of software, systems and data on behalf of the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) of the DOH and the wider Health and Social Care (HSC) within Northern Ireland.  
Release of this information would make SPPG and BSO, and by association the wider HSC more vulnerable to crime (namely a malicious attack on SPPG/BSO’s network). As such release of this information would be seen to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime by making BSO more vulnerable to hacking at a given time.
- b) Under data protection legislation, SPPG and BSO (on behalf of SPPG) has a legal obligation to process personal data in a manner that ensures its appropriate security using appropriate technical or organisational measures.

The release of this information is therefore a reasonable threat to the security and integrity of confidential personal data held on our systems.

- c) SPPG and the wider HSC operate the majority of their services with a high dependency on IT. Many services operate almost exclusively via information held within our network infrastructure. Any disruption of BSO's network infrastructure, even for a short period would be likely to severely restrict our ability to carry out statutory functions across the wider HSC network.

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](#)

### **Section 43 – ‘Commercial Interests’**

- (1) Information is exempt information if it constitutes a trade secret.
- (2) Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).

#### **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 released. In the FOIA there is a presumption that information should be released unless there are compelling reasons to withhold it.

#### **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 suppliers.

- 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) likely to affect DoH ability to negotiate contracts in the future and consequently generate revenue from non-public funds
- e) It is also considered that disclosure would be likely to deter potential bidders for future contracts from competing 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](#)