

## Questions:

I am requesting information regarding the Department of Health's national policy on the adoption of automated surgical technology within Health and Social Care (HSC) Northern Ireland.

1. Does the Department of Health hold any national policy documents or "Strategic Directives" regarding the use of automated circular stapling devices (e.g., ZSR, CircCurer) to address urology surgical backlogs?
2. What assessment has the Department made regarding the productivity gains offered by moving minor therapeutic urological procedures from main operating theatres to outpatient "See-and-Treat" clinics using automated technology?
3. What specific guidance has the Department issued to the five HSC Trusts to ensure compliance with the Montgomery v Lanarkshire (2015) ruling, regarding the duty to inform patients of the choice between traditional manual surgery and automated alternatives?
4. Has the Department reviewed the "Liverpool Model" (LUHFT) of ZSR implementation to assess its suitability for a regional rollout in Northern Ireland?

## Responses:

1. The Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) of the Department of Health (DOH) does not hold any such documents.
2. The DOH continues to identify opportunities within urology services to transfer procedures to the most appropriate setting on an ongoing basis. This includes increasing the number of patients seen as an 'outpatient with procedure', such as the delivery of flexible sigmoidoscopy procedures in outpatient settings.

The use of new and emerging technology has increased also, with Rezum and aquablation technology now available.

Provision of aquablation technology has meant that trans urethral resection of prostate (TURP) procedures can be undertaken safely in standalone units such as Lagan Valley Hospital, freeing up capacity in main theatres which can be used for other appropriate procedures.

3. The Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) of the Department of Health (DOH) has not issued guidance.
4. No.

Date response issued: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2026  
Reference Number: DOH 2026-0104