

Question:

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 concerning the Podiatric Surgery Task & Finish Group established in November 2021 to develop a prototype commissioned podiatric surgery service within Health and Social Care Northern Ireland.

I am particularly interested in understanding the work undertaken by the group and the factors that informed the decision to pause development of the proposed service model in 2022.

Please provide, where held:

1. The Task & Finish Group's terms of reference.
2. The membership of the group, including the organisations, professions or stakeholder groups represented. I am not requesting personal contact details.
3. Agendas and minutes of meetings held by the group.
4. Papers, presentations, briefing documents or evidence considered by the group concerning podiatric surgery service models.
5. Any proposed prototype service model, pathway, service specification, options appraisal or business case developed as part of the work.
6. Records of formal stakeholder consultation or engagement, including summaries of feedback received.
7. Any reports, recommendations or conclusions produced by the group.
8. Records explaining the decision to pause the work in 2022, including any identified concerns, barriers or unresolved issues relating to implementation.
9. Any subsequent papers or correspondence, up to the present date, concerning whether or when development of a podiatric surgery service in Northern Ireland might be reconsidered.

Response:

I am writing to confirm that the Department of Health has now completed its search for the information you requested on the 17 August 2026 in respect of the Podiatric Surgery Task & Finish Group.

The Department of Health has considered your request under the above legislation and I can confirm that we hold information related to your request.

For context, in November 2021 a Task and Finish (T&F) group was established by the Department of Health to explore different service models for a podiatric surgery service and to then develop a proposal for a pilot podiatric surgery service for Northern Ireland.

Following initial engagement with relevant stakeholders, it was agreed that there was no current service model available elsewhere that would meet the needs of Northern Ireland. It was also determined that the current pressures at that time would be best met within existing provisions, and that changing the service model would therefore cause unnecessary turmoil during difficult times. The Group's focus therefore subsequently shifted to validation of the existing Foot and Ankle waiting list.

The work to develop a podiatric surgery service model was therefore not progressed further and was paused in 2022, with the intention that it may be revisited when resources allow.

A breakdown of your request is provided below. Please note documents are attached separately in email.

1. The Task & Finish Group's terms of reference.	• Attached. • Section 40(2) – Personal information. Redaction applied to personal names.
2. The membership of the group, including the organisations, professions or stakeholder groups represented. I am not requesting personal contact details.	• Included in Terms of Reference. • Section 40(2) – Personal information. Redaction applied to personal names.
3. Agendas and minutes of meetings held by the group.	• Attached. • Section 40(2) – Personal information. Redaction applied to personal names. • 4/10/21 – Internal note • 25/10/21 – Internal note • 17/1/22 – Note of meeting • 4/2/22 – Note of meeting • 8/2/22 – Note of meeting • 22/3/22 – Agenda and Minutes
4. Papers, presentations, briefing documents or evidence considered by the group concerning podiatric surgery service models.	All documentation provided by a 3rd party; 1. 3rd Party presentation (1) – Withheld under Section 41 Confidentiality. 2. A cost-effective solution for reducing elective waits Podiatric Surgery – Available online at https://rcpod.org.uk/the-college/position-statements/podiatric-surgery-a-cost-effective-solution-for-reducing-elective-waits

	3. Podiatry Service Costs – attached. Please note that the information regarding the podiatric surgery costs is now 5 years old and out of date. 4. 3rd Party presentation (2) - Withheld under Section 41 Confidentiality.
5. Any proposed prototype service model, pathway, service specification, options appraisal or business case developed as part of the work.	Information not held.
6. Records of formal stakeholder consultation or engagement, including summaries of feedback received.	- Records of stakeholder engagement attached as part 3 above. - Section 40(2) – Personal information. Redaction applied to personal names.
7. Any reports, recommendations or conclusions produced by the group.	Attached.
8. Records explaining the decision to pause the work in 2022, including any identified concerns, barriers or unresolved issues relating to implementation.	
9. Any subsequent papers or correspondence, up to the present date, concerning whether or when development of a podiatric surgery service in Northern Ireland might be reconsidered.	Withheld, exemption applied - Section 35 (1)(a) - Formulation or development of government policy – See Public Interest Test.

You have the right to request a formal review by the Department within two calendar months of the date of this letter. If you wish to do so, please write FAO Internal Reviewer (foi@health-ni.gov.uk), Annexe 3, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3SQ.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

* If you would like to request a copy of attachments related to this response, please contact FOI@health-ni.gov.uk

Date response issued: 14 September 2026
Reference Number: DOH/2026-0204