

Question:

Under Freedom of Information regulations I would like to know:-

Please provide records held by the Ministerial Private Office and, where relevant, the Permanent Secretary's Office for the most recent financial year.

For any such appointments or engagements identified, please provide:

- the nature and purpose of the work commissioned;
- the value of the engagement;
- the procurement/appointment route used;
- whether the opportunity was advertised or subject to competition;
- where there was no open competition, the basis on which the individual or organisation was identified and selected;
- any recorded involvement of the Minister or Ministerial Private Office in identifying, recommending or selecting the individual or organisation;
- the relevant approvals, business case, direct award/single tender action documentation or other governance documentation relating to the appointment.

For clarity, I am interested in the process by which individuals are brought in to undertake paid consultancy or advisory work where there has not been an open recruitment or procurement exercise, rather than consultancy expenditure generally.

If this refined request would still exceed the Section 12 cost limit, I would be grateful if, in accordance with the Department's Section 16 duty to provide advice and assistance, you could advise me how this could be further refined while retaining the core focus on non-competitive appointments involving the Minister or Ministerial Private Office.

Response:

Our response has been set out below.

Lead Negotiator – General Medical Services Contract (Northern Ireland)

Ruth Rankine

There are no recorded minutes of meetings between the Minister and the Permanent Secretary to specifically discuss Ms Rankine's appointment.

Reference to a meeting to be arranged between the Minister/Permanent Secretary and Ms Rankine was made during a wider meeting between the Minister and the Permanent Secretary on 29 January 2026.

The Department engaged Ms Rankine to fulfil this role via the NHS Alliance due to her significant experience of primary care and GP contracts.

Neighbourhood Model GP Lead

David Ross

During a meeting between the Minister and the Permanent Secretary on 19 February 2026, reference was made to Dr David Ross and his involvement as a GP champion for the Neighbourhood Model (NHM).

The extract from the note of the meeting indicates that *'Linked into the vision event and NHM – suggestion of a champion well received – David Ross has been suggested.'*

At a meeting on 18 March 2026 between the Minister and the Permanent Secretary, reference was made to Dr David Ross and his position as NHM GP Champion.

The extract from the note of the meeting indicates that *'Spoken to David Ross – content with approach and agreeable subject to the development of a JD – 2 days per week NHM Champion'* and *'Hoping to be able to announce the appointment of David Ross shortly.'*

The Department engaged Dr Ross to work alongside the Neighbourhood team in the Strategic Planning and Performance Group to be an expert advisor to the programme.

BHSCT Intervention

Jennifer Hill

There are no recorded minutes of meetings between the Minister and the Permanent Secretary to specifically discuss Dr Hill's appointment. There is a reference to the announcement of Dr Hill's appointment during a wider meeting between the Minister and the Permanent Secretary on 1 July 2025.

An extract from the note of the meeting indicates that a letter would issue to the Health Committee advising of 'the announcement of the appointment of Jennifer Hill'.

The Department engaged Dr Hill to fulfil this role via the HSC Leadership Centre due to her significant experience of improving clinical governance within the NHS.

Peter McBride

There are no recorded minutes of meetings between the Minister and the Permanent Secretary to specifically discuss Mr McBride's appointment.

The Department engaged Mr McBride to focus on the BHSCCT wider cultural assessment and Mr McBride was also engaged through the HSC Leadership Centre

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