

Question:

“Good afternoon, I would like to submit a Freedom of Information request for the following:

<https://www.rqia.org.uk/rqia-statement-rqia-publishes-follow-up-inspection-report-on-the-temporary-emergency-general-surgery-egs-pathways-in-the-western-hsc-trust/>

The online 'RQIA statement: RQIA publishes follow-up 'Inspection Report on the temporary Emergency General Surgery (EGS) Pathways in the Western HSC Trust' report on September 15, 2026.

According to RQIA: Key findings in this follow-up inspection, relating to these earlier urgent recommendations, include;

Additional NIAS Ambulance capacity has not been put in place. RQIA has written to the Department of Health in accordance with Articles 4 and 35(3) of the H&PPS (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2023 advising that the Department should take appropriate steps to address this matter, which has remained outstanding since the original RQIA Review recommendations of October 2024, by the commissioning of additional NIAS emergency ambulance and crew capacity.

I am formally requesting via FOI a copy of the letter from RQIA, written in accordance with Articles 4 and 35 (3) of the H&PSS Order 2003, advising this matter, which has remained outstanding since the original RQIA Review recommendations of October 2024, by the commissioning of additional emergency ambulance and crew capacity.

Thanks in anticipation.”

Response:

I am writing further to your request of 24 September 2026 under the above legislation for a letter issued by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) to the Department of Health (DoH), advising that the DoH should take appropriate steps to address additional Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) capacity in the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHST). This followed the RQIA's inspection report into Emergency General Surgery in the WHST in June 2026 and a further inspection conducted by RQIA in both the South West Acute and Altnagelvin Hospitals in July/August 2026.

The Department has considered your request under the above legislation and has agreed to release this letter to you. A copy of the letter is enclosed to the issuing email with redactions as per Section 40(2) pertaining to personal information.

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), Room A3.5a, 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.

Date response issued: 20 October 2026
Reference Number: DOH 2026/0260