

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2026

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Website: [www.esht.nhs.uk](http://www.esht.nhs.uk)

Further to your recent request for information made under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000, I now set out our answers to your specific questions, and any clarifications sought and provided, as follows:

**I am researching the propensity for NHS trusts to outsource radiology reporting. Please provide, under the Freedom of Information act, the following information for hospitals in your trust:**

**1. Please list each of your outsourced teleradiology providers**

Under Section 31(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Trust can confirm that it holds information relevant to your request, however, we are unable to disclose it for the reasons explained below.

Historically, we would disclose information relevant to the Trust's IT systems, infrastructure and software as part of our transparency agenda under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). However, in light of the recent cyber-attacks on NHS hospitals and the serious impact these have had on patient services and the loss of patient data, we are having to reconsider this approach. Please see several links to news articles about these recent cyber incidents provided below for your information.

- [NHS England — London » Synnovis Ransomware Cyber-Attack](#)
- [NHS England confirm patient data stolen in cyber attack - BBC News](#)
- [Merseyside: Three more hospitals hit by cyber attack - BBC News](#)

As a result of these attacks, thousands of hospital and GP appointments were disrupted, operations were cancelled, and confidential patient data was stolen which included patient names, dates of birth, NHS numbers and descriptions of blood tests.

When we respond to a Freedom of Information request, we are unable to establish the intent behind the request. Disclosure under the FOIA involves the release of information to the world at large, free from any duty of confidence. Providing information about our systems or security measures to one person is the same as publishing it for everyone. While most people are honest and have no intention of misusing information to cause damage, there are criminals who look for opportunities to exploit system weaknesses for financial gain or to cause disruption.

In the context of the FOIA, the term “public interest” does not refer to the private or commercial interests of a requestor; its meaning is for the “public good”. The Trust receives a significant number of requests each year regarding our IT systems, infrastructure and cyber security measures. Most of these requests are commercially driven and serve no direct public interest. Information relevant to our IT portfolio is often requested by consultancy companies who then pass on this information to their client base. Many of these requests are submitted through the FOI portal [whatdotheyknow.com](http://whatdotheyknow.com) who publish our responses, making this information available to an even wider audience.

As a large NHS Trust we hold extensive personal data relevant to our patients and staff, much of which is considered very sensitive. A lot of this information is held electronically on various administration and clinical systems. We have a duty under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR to protect this personal information and take all necessary steps to ensure this data is kept safe. This means not disclosing information that could allow criminals to gain unlawful access to our systems and infrastructure. The Trust can be heavily fined should it be found to have acted in a negligent way which results in a personal data breach. We need to demonstrate that we comply with our legal obligations under data protection and freedom of information legislation, but we must be careful that too much transparency does not result in harm to our patients or staff, or cause disruption to our services.

Moreover, under the Network and Information Systems (NIS) Regulations Act 2018, operators of essential services such as NHS organisations like ours have a legal obligation to protect the security of our networks and information systems in order to safeguard our essential services. By releasing information that could increase the likelihood or severity of a cyber-attack, the Trust would fail to meet its security duties as stated in Section 10 of the Network and Information Systems Regulations 2018. Should we not comply with these requirements regulatory action can be taken against the Trust. Further information about the Network and Information Systems (NIS) Regulations Act 2018 can be found here – [The Network and Information Systems Regulations 2018: guide for the health sector in England - GOV.UK](#)

Your request asks for specific details regarding our Teleradiology Providers which, for the reasons explained above, would be inappropriate to release into the public domain. If disclosed, it is possible that patient data as well as other confidential information would be put at risk. Such disclosure could also impact on the security of our systems and result in serious disruption to the health services we deliver to the local community. Section 31(1)(a) of FOIA provides that information is exempt if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice (a) the prevention or detection of crime. In this case, disclosure would be likely to prejudice the prevention of crime by enabling or encouraging malicious acts which could compromise the Trust’s IT systems and infrastructure. The Trust’s capacity to defend itself from such acts relates to the purposes of crime prevention and therefore Section 31(a) exemption is applicable in these circumstances. For these reasons, the Trust considers disclosure of the information you are seeking to be exempt under Section 31(1)(a) [*law enforcement*] of the FOIA and the name of our outsourced teleradiology provider is being withheld. The full wording of Section 31 can be found here: [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#)

Section 31 is a *qualified* exemption and therefore we must consider the prejudice or harm that may be caused by disclosure of the information you have requested, as well as apply a public interest test that weighs up the factors in maintaining the exemption against those in favour of disclosure.

In considering the prejudice or harm that disclosure may cause, as explained should the Trust release information into the public domain which draws attention to any weaknesses relevant to the security of our systems or those of a supplier, this information could be exploited by individuals with criminal intent. Increasing the likelihood of criminal activity in this way would be irresponsible and could encourage malicious acts which could compromise our IT systems or infrastructure, result in the loss of personal data and/or impact on the delivery of our patient services. We consider these concerns particularly relevant and valid considering the increasing number of cyber incidents affecting NHS systems in recent years and the view by government, the ICO and NHS leaders that the threat of cyber incidents to the public sector is real and increasing.

- [Organisations must do more to combat the growing threat of cyber attacks | ICO](#)

In the Government's Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2030, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office states on page 7:

*“Government organisations - and the functions and services they deliver - are the cornerstone of our society. It is their significance, however, that makes them an attractive target for an ever-expanding army of adversaries, often with the kind of powerful cyber capabilities which, not so long ago, would have been the sole preserve of nation states. Whether in the pursuit of government data for strategic advantage or in seeking the disruption of public services for financial or political gain, the threat faced by government is very real and present.*

*Government organisations are routinely and relentlessly targeted: of the 777 incidents managed by the National Cyber Security Centre between September 2020 and August 2021, around 40% were aimed at the public sector. This upward trend shows no signs of abating.”*

With this in mind, we then considered the public interest test for and against disclosure. It should be noted that the public interest in this context refers to the public good, not what is 'of interest' to the public or the private or commercial interests of the requester. In this case we consider the public interest factors in favour of disclosure are:

- Evidences the Trust's transparency and accountability
- Provides information relevant to the IT systems and applications the Trust uses
- Reassures the public and partners that the Trust procures these systems in line with Procurement legislation
- Reassures the public and partners that the Trust's IT infrastructure and systems are secure

Factors in favour of withholding this information are:

- Public interest in crime prevention
- Public interest in avoiding disruption to our health services
- Public interest in maintaining the integrity and security of the Trust's systems
- Public interest in the Trust avoiding the costs associated with any malicious acts (e.g. recovery, revenue, regulatory fines)
- Public interest in complying with our legal obligations to safeguard the sensitive confidential information we hold

In considering all of these factors, we have concluded that the balance of public interest lies in upholding the exemption and not releasing the information requested. Although disclosure would provide transparency about our software systems and IT infrastructure, this is outweighed by the harm that could be caused by people who wish to use this information to assess any vulnerabilities in our security measures and consequently use this information for unlawful purposes. Cybercrime can not only lead to major service disruption but can also result in significant financial losses. As a publicly funded organisation, we have a duty for ensuring our public funding is protected and spent responsibly. Moreover, as a public body the Trust must demonstrate that it keeps its confidential data and IT infrastructure safe and complies with relevant legislation, but at the same time we must be vigilant that transparency does not provide an opportunity for individuals to act against the Trust. In considering the impact that recent cyber-attacks have had on NHS services, including the cancellation of thousands of patient appointments and procedures as well as the loss of confidential patient data, we consider the overriding public interest lies in withholding this information. The private or commercial interests of a requester should not outweigh the public interest in protecting the integrity of our systems and continuity of our essential patient services. Although we appreciate there may be legitimate intentions behind requesting this information, we must take a cautious approach to requests of this nature and appreciate your understanding in this matter.

It is important to note that the Trust and its commissioning partners are required to follow very specific rules when procuring equipment or services. Information about procurement and tendering can be found on our website – [Governing documents, incorporating: Standing Orders, Standing Financial Instructions, Scheme of Delegation.](#)

To contact the Procurement Service, please email - [esht.procurement@nhs.net](mailto:esht.procurement@nhs.net).

**2. Please provide the volume of radiology reporting OUTSOURCED to teleradiology providers and other providers annually from 2023-2025. The data should be broken down by provider the following categories:**

- a) **Overnight emergency**
- b) **Routine elective reporting (MRI, CT)**
- c) **Plain film reporting**
- d) **Day time emergency reporting**
- e) **Split into each hospital within the Trust**

Please see the attached document - 'FOI 26-157 Response'.

**3. Please provide TOTAL volume of scans reported (inhouse and outsourced) annually from 2023-2025, broken into the following:**

- a) **Overnight emergency**
- b) **Routine elective reporting (MRI, CT)**
- c) **Plain film reporting**
- d) **Day time emergency reporting**
- e) **Split into each hospital within the Trust**

Please see the attached document - 'FOI 26-157 Response'.

**4. Start date, duration, and end date of any contracts with teleradiology providers**

Whilst the Trust holds the information requested, it is applying a Section 43(2) exemption in relation to this part of the request as the release of the information is likely to prejudice its commercial interests.

In applying the exemption consideration has been given to the public interest in enabling scrutiny of public sector decision making and the general public interest in accountability and transparency.

We have concluded that information broken down to the level requested could cause harm to the Trust as this could lead to the Trust being excluded from future contracts, therefore increasing our costs and not gaining best value for money.

In this instance, we consider that the public interest in withholding the information is greater than the public interest in disclosing the information.

**5. Who in the Trust is responsible (Title and name if possible) for the management of the contract?**

Angela Alletson  
Head of Procurement

Nansi Botros  
Head of Radiology, Medical Illustration, Vascular Access and Bexhill Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC)

**6. What was the total annual spend on outsourced teleradiology (if relevant split by emergency and elective) from 2023-2025?**

Please see the attached document - 'FOI 26-157 Response'.

I trust this information is helpful in its detail or explanation however, if you are dissatisfied with the response, then you have the right to request an internal review. If you wish to seek an internal review, please write to the Freedom of Information Team at [esh-tr.foi@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.foi@nhs.net) quoting the above FOI reference number, within 40 working days. Please note the Trust is not obliged to accept a request for an internal review after this time period.

Yours faithfully

Freedom of Information (FOI) Team  
East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust  
0300 131 4716  
Core Hours of Business: Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm

Year		Provider	Volume of Radiology Reporting Outsourced		Volume of Scans (Inhouse & Outsourced)		Contract Start Date	Contract Duration	Contract End Date	Person Responsible for Contract	Total Annual Spend for Outsourced Radiology					
			Conquest Hospital	Eastbourne District General Hospital	Conquest Hospital	Eastbourne District General Hospital										
2023	a) Overnight emergency	Section 31(1)(a) applied, please see letter.	3836	3746	3917	3870	Section 43(2) applied, please see letter.	Angela Alletson Head of Procurement								
	b) Routine elective reporting (MRI, CT)		10331	5307	38315	35232										
	c) Plain film reporting		5684	8092	32210	30861										
	d) Day time emergency reporting		2833	3388	8606	10471										
	<b>Total Spend - 2023</b>										<b>£1,750,893</b>					
2024	a) Overnight emergency		4246	4328	4131	4601				Section 43(2) applied, please see letter.	Nansi Botros Head of Radiology, Medical Illustration, Vascular Access and Bexhill CDC					
	b) Routine elective reporting (MRI, CT)		12923	5400	43329	35952										
	c) Plain film reporting		6386	9022	36609	35835										
	d) Day time emergency reporting		3225	4104	9878	13366										
	<b>Total Spend - 2024</b>													<b>£2,512,435</b>		
2025	a) Overnight emergency		4634	4904	4802	5472							Section 43(2) applied, please see letter.	Nansi Botros Head of Radiology, Medical Illustration, Vascular Access and Bexhill CDC		
	b) Routine elective reporting (MRI, CT)		17254	5422	47546	34256										
	c) Plain film reporting		5112	6207	36908	35094										
	d) Day time emergency reporting		4063	5287	11082	15795										
	<b>Total Spend - 2025</b>															