



Patient and Client Council
5th Floor, 14-16 Great Victoria Street
Belfast
BT2 7BA

17th April 2025

By Email

[REDACTED]

Ref: FOI 2465

Dear [REDACTED],

I am writing to you in response to your Freedom of Information request received by the Patient and Client Council (PCC) on 28th March 2025 in which you requested information relating to a PCC Conference.

Please find the response below.

1. If, as you state, “Members of the public do not need to register with our membership scheme in order to attend our events”, why was I told that I had to register for the membership scheme in order to attend today’s event?

Referencing the email sent to [REDACTED] on 13 March; [REDACTED] was encouraged to sign up to the membership scheme to ensure [REDACTED] did not miss the advertisement of the event. [REDACTED] was not told that [REDACTED] had to register to the membership scheme in order to attend the event.

2. How could I, as a non-member of PCC, have attended this event?

To attend the event as a ‘non-member of the PCC’, in response to the rescheduled date advertisement, members of the public were asked to email anna.obrien@pcc-ni.net with a few lines on why they would like to attend by 12 noon on Friday 21st March 2025.

3. Why does PCC operate a membership scheme whereby priority is given to

some members of the public members for specific purposes e.g. attendance at this and other PCC events?

When advertising PCC events, we share the invite with Engagement Platform Members and PCC Members in the first instance because they have expressed an interest in PCC's work and engagement opportunities. However, the event advertisement follows to members of the wider public very shortly after, typically just a few days after. Where the event has no venue capacity restrictions, we would advertise in tandem.

4. (a) How many organisations are currently members of PCC?

(b) How many individuals are currently members?

This information is not available.

PCC added the option to sign-up to the Membership Scheme as either an individual or an organisation in 2019 and therefore we cannot filter the data on the database prior/ give an accurate answer to this question. Since 2019, 89% of those who have signed up to the Membership Scheme have done so as individuals.

5. How does a membership scheme by a public body promote equal opportunities for all?

We aim to share opportunities for members of the public to get involved with PCC and the wider Health and Social Care network via all of our communication channels – such as; our social media accounts (X/Facebook/ LinkedIn) and on our website, as well as at in-person events such as PCC Support in the Community sessions and via stakeholder databases.

We encourage the public to join our Membership Scheme, which is free and open to all, in order to receive our UPDATES digital newsletter on a weekly basis, bringing together topical HSC news articles, key public health information, upcoming events and opportunities to get involved across the system. We consider this a vehicle for those who are interested in our work and the HSC to receive regular information and updates.

Please note that our membership scheme is currently under review and development.

6. Provide a copy of the PCC governance regulations that permit the creation and operation of a membership scheme based on preferential treatment.

Attached copies of Primary Legislation relating to PCC and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Framework, as well as The Patient and Client Council (Membership and Procedure) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009,

which outlines the membership and remit of PCC's Council. There are no specific governance regulations to a membership scheme.

7. How is preference for members to access events implemented in practice? For example, are non-member requests deferred until there are no more applications from non-members?

The membership scheme is open for any member of the public to join. Those who have signed up to the scheme are on occasions made aware of involvement opportunities a short period before it goes out for general circulation on our social media channels. This is typically a matter of days. In some instances, information is shared simultaneously with our membership scheme and on our socials.

8. What was the total number of places available for people to attend this event?

100

9. At yesterday's date:

(a) How many organisations were registered for today's event?

30;

13 Health and Social Care Organisations

11 Regulators/ Professional Bodies/ Union

6 Voluntary and Community

In order to best represent the interests of the public and seek to influence change, working with the PSA, we sought to develop an attendee list and speakers which had balanced representation.

When planning the event (originally for 28 January 2025), the Events Team allocated spaces as follows;

- Staff and Speakers: 20
- Members of the Public: 20
- Health and Social Care Organisations: 20
- Regulators/ Professional Bodies/ Unions: 20
- Community and Voluntary: 20

Venue Capacity: 100

(b) How many individuals who are PCC members were registered to attend?

PSA/PCC did not record which members of the public were members or non-members of the PCC on the registration list.

'Members of the public' in attendance was 11, an additional 7 (including [REDACTED]) watched via livestream. In light of the reduced numbers of final attendees, the proportion of members of the public attending in person and online, was broadly in proportion to planned allocations.

(c) How many individuals who are not PCC members were registered to attend?

PSA/PCC did not record which members of the public were members or non-members of the PCC on the registration list.

'Members of the public' in attendance was 11, an additional 7 (including [REDACTED]) watched via livestream.

10. At yesterday's date, were there any cancellations for the event? If so, how many?

The day before the event, PCC/PSA were expecting 80 people to attend.

11. (a) How many people in total attended today's event?

61 people attended the event in-person, 14 people watched via the livestream link.

(b) How many were representatives of organisations?

50, please note this figure includes Community and Voluntary, Regulators, Professional Bodies and Health and Social Care representatives – as per 9a answer above.

(c) How many were individuals who are PCC members?

As above, PSA/PCC did not record which members of the public were members or non-members of the PCC on the registration list.

(d) How many were individuals who are not PCC members?

As above, PSA/PCC did not record which members of the public were members or non-members of the PCC on the registration list.

12. You indicate that 18 March 2025 was the only date on which the postponed

event was readvertised on PCC's social media. Please confirm if this is the case.

Yes.

Please note that this was a rescheduled event and majority of spaces were already allocated to previously registered attendees for the event on 28 January 2025.

13. Was the event advertised on PCC's website. If so, please provide the link.

Yes.

Link: <https://pcc-ni.net/pcc-engage/engagement-opportunities/professionals-and-the-public-in-partnership-for-patient-safety/>

14. Did PCC promote the event via any other methods? If so, where and when.

The event was advertised to;

PCC Engagement Platform members on 13 March, on our website 14 March, via the Membership Newsletter 14 March, on Social Media (FB/X/LinkedIn) 18 March and was sent to engage@hscni.net on 19 March 9:30am for display on the engage website.

15. How does PCC advertise events to members of the public who are not on or who do not frequently use social media?

Direct email to those who are members and via our website. Please note that our membership scheme is currently under review and development.

I hope that the information provided assists you. If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter, as the PCC, along with all other public authorities are not obliged to accept internal review requests after this period has lapsed.

In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to The Business Services Organisation (BSO), which provides an Information Governance service on our behalf:

Post: Information Governance Manager,
2 Franklin Street,
Belfast,
BT2 8DQ

Email: foi.bso@hscni.net

If, following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision-making panel, you remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request, you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PCC has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act

You can contact Information Commissioner at:

The Information Commissioner's Office – Northern Ireland
10th Floor
Causeway Tower
9 James Street South
Belfast
BT2 8DN

Telephone: 0303 123 1114

Email: ni@ico.org.uk

In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out. However the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Fionnuala Murphy', is shown above the printed name.

Fionnuala Murphy
Business and Governance Manager
Patient and Client Council