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8<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**BY EMAIL**

**Ref: FOI 1235**

Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing to you in response to your correspondence, received by the Patient Client Council (PCC) on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020, in which you requested the minutes of the PCC 2020 Board Meeting, along with information pertaining to what meetings the PCC Board has held in relation to Covid-19.

In relation to your request for the minutes of the PCC 2020 Board Meeting, the last Board Meeting was held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020. These Minutes will be considered and approved at the next Board Meeting (i.e. 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020). As these are not approved minutes, I consider these to be currently exempt from disclosure under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

***22 Information intended for future publication***

*(1) Information is exempt information if—*

*(a) the information is held by the public authority with a view to its publication, by the authority or any other person, at some future date (whether determined or not),*

*(b) the information was already held with a view to such publication at the time when the request for information was made, and*

*(c) it is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information should be withheld from disclosure until the date referred to in paragraph (a).*

*(2) The duty to confirm or deny does not arise if, or to the extent that, compliance with section 1(1)(a) would involve the disclosure of any information (whether or not already recorded) which falls within subsection (1).*

Section 22 allows for circumstances when it is reasonable for public authorities to delay the provision of information until it is made generally available through publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption and as such is subject to a public interest test, under which I have considered the public interest in disclosing the information prior to approval at the next board meeting.

In considering this public interest, I note the public interest in transparency being demonstrated by releasing the information with this reply. Further I note that there is a public interest in public bodies providing information they hold that falls within the scope of an FOI request as quickly as possible.

However, this needs to be balanced with the public interest in such a public body ensuring the maximum cost effectiveness and sharing accurate information. I am of the view that provision of this information in response to an FOI request prior to publication is not the most cost effective way of placing this information in the public domain, when it may yet be subject to further amendments and the final version will be published in due course.

Under the exemption provided by section 22 of the FOIA 2000, it must be reasonable in all the circumstances to withhold the information until the intended date of publication. Given the potential for further modification and indeed the imminence of the minutes being finalised, I have concluded that the public interest in withholding this information outweighs the public interest in releasing it prior to its intended approval. However, I can confirm that once these Minutes are finalised, I will send you a copy.

With regards to your request asking what meetings have been held by the PCC Board in relation to Covid-19, I should advise you that the PCC Board has been briefed regularly by the Chief Executive, through the Chair, on operational changes to the PCC's working patterns. [These changes have included extending the Helpline provision, maintaining support to patients, clients and their families, and engaging intensively with the HSC organisations to ensure that accurate and up to date information is readily available to the public.]

If it would be helpful to you, the Chief Executive would be happy to arrange to meet with you to discuss the PCC's role and actions to date, as well as to hear any your concerns and ideas you may have. Should you wish to avail of this offer please contact me by return email.

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.

In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to

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

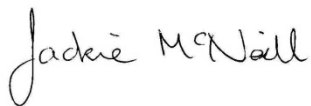
If, following an internal review carried out by an independent decision making panel, you remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request, you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the BSO has complied with the terms of the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

You can contact Information Commissioner at:

**Website:** [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)  
**Phone:** 0303 123 1113  
**Email:** [casework@ico.org.uk](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk)  
**Post:** Information Commissioner's Office  
3rd Floor, 14 Cromac Place  
Belfast  
BT7 2JB

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,



Jackie McNeill  
**Head of Development and Corporate Services, PCC**