



## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST**

Please note the text of this request has been reproduced exactly as received.

**FOI Reference number: FOI 13/2025**

**Date: 21 May 2025**

### **Request.**

Requestor comments - The General Medical Council, (GMC), advises that the term 'patient' in its guidance also refers to anyone whose personal information, a registered medical practitioner holds or has access to, whether or not caring for them in a traditional therapeutic relationship.

In the guidelines Good Occupational Medical Practice, (from The Faculty of Occupational Medicine, where all SMP/IMR's are registered), the term 'patient'\* includes workers who consult the occupational physician either voluntarily or by obligation, e.g. statutory medical examination.

**1) Can the Board confirm that during examinations performed by the SMP/IMR the person being assessed/examined is classed as a "patient".**

### **Answer:**

**The Board refers to a person being assessed as a person, member or an applicant as referred to in The Police Pensions Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and have regard for the Joint Guidance for Medical Practitioners on Injury on Duty Awards.**

Requestor comments - Within the context of Good Occupational Practice it states that the practitioner should offer the worker or show them a copy of the report being written about them before it is sent.

**2) Can the NIPB explain why this is not the case in its procedures?**

### **Answer:**

**This is a request for an explanation and does not constitute a valid Freedom of Information Act request. The question asks the Board to provide an explanation of a particular action rather than to provide a copy of recorded information.**

Requestor comments - The SMP/IMR examination, I have been informed by one of your Board members, is only a PIP, (Department of Communities Personal Independence Payment), medical.

Can you confirm that :

3) the SMP/IMR examination is only in the form of a PIP medical

**Answer:**

The Board cannot comment on how PIP medicals are carried out as this is outside our remit. SMPs and IMRs address the statutory questions as set out in the pension and injury on duty Regulations, as well as the Joint Guidance for Medical Practitioners.

Requestor comments - During a PIP medical examination, the assessor awards points for activities/actions/abilities.

4) Does the SMP/IMR award points similar to a PIP medical examination?  
If yes please forward the documents used for reference.

**Answer:**

No.

5) If points are awarded by the SMP/IMR to work out how the assessment is carried out, how exactly does the SMP/IMR work out the following bandings of the person being examined?

I. Slight

II. Minor

III. Major

IV. Very severe

if not what standard of examination does it come under.

**Answer:**

N/A

6) If points are awarded by the SMP/IMR to work out how the assessment is carried out, how exactly does the SMP/IMR work out the following bandings of the person being examined?

V. Slight

VI. Minor

VII. Major

VIII. Very severe

**Answer:**

N/A

Requestor comments - Good clinical practice in the occupational health setting should include:

assessing adequately the patient's health, based on the clinical and occupational history and clinical signs, an understanding of the work (including contemplated work) and workplace, and if necessary, an appropriate examination of the patient, and any relevant medical reports and tests;

The SMP/IMR only receives access to the patients records on the day of the assessment and has to examine them and prepare a report before leaving the Boards premises.

**7) How many assessments/examinations are typically carried out by each doctor on the day of the SMP/IMR being in residence.**

**Answer:**

The SMP can carry out up to two face to face assessments per day as per their availability and room availability. The Department of Justice (DoJ) are responsible for determining IMR assessments and you can make an FOI request for information via [foi@justice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:foi@justice-ni.gov.uk)

**8) Does the Board feel that this process is best practice?**

**Answer:**

This is a request for an explanation and does not constitute a valid Freedom of Information Act request. The question asks the Board to provide an explanation of a particular action rather than to provide a copy of recorded information.

Requestor comments - If the SMP/IMR has three assessments to complete on one day how is this enough time to read, digest, examine and the write a report on one individual never mind three,

**9) Do Board staff sift through the persons personal records prior to the SMP/IMR examination and prepare a report for the SMP/IMR to read to make it easier for the SMP/IMR to assess the patient?**

**Answer:**

No, Board Officials do not prepare a report for the SMP.

A cover paper is provided to the SMP which contains basic data (i.e. name, force number, dob) and background (i.e. date of joining, application date etc) with incidents/ medical reports tabbed for ease of reference. The DoJ are responsible for determining IMR assessments and you can make an FOI request for information via [foi@justice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:foi@justice-ni.gov.uk)

Requestor comments - I also note that all SMP/IMR are self-employed and work to the Board independently.

**10) Does the Board indemnify each of them for the assessments carried out, if so I wish to see a copy of the Certificate of Insurance which covers this. If this does not happen, please explain why not.**

**Answer:**

**No, SMP's are required to provide their own indemnity Insurance. This is a request for an explanation and does not constitute a valid Freedom of Information Act request. The question asks the Board to provide an explanation of a particular action rather than to provide a copy of recorded information.**

**11) I also have questions for the appointed SMP/IMR and I request that I be provided with details of all so I may make contact with them:**

**Name**

**GMC Registration No.**

**Full Registered Address**

**Occupational Health Med No.**

**Indemnity Insurance (given to Board)**

**Answer:**

The information referred to within this response, specifically information about each of the SMPs appointed by the Northern Ireland Policing Board (**the Board**) and their qualifications may be found on the Board's website at the following link <https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/smp-arrangements-1st-october-2016>

As such the exemption under section 21 (Information accessible by other means) applies to this information. As this is an absolute exemption the Board is not required to carry out a public interest test.

In relation to your request for the full registered address of the SMP, as this is personal information, pertaining to individual SMPs the Board is not in a position to provide it to you.

This personal information is exempt from disclosure to you under section 40(2) by virtue of section 40(3)(a)(i) of the FOIA. Section 40(2) allows a public authority to withhold information from a response to a request for information under the FOIA when the information requested is personal information relating to someone other than the requester and its disclosure would contravene one of the data protection principles. The first data protection principle requires personal data to be processed fairly and lawfully.

This personal data is exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) of the FOIA as, in our view, it would be unfair to provide it to you, and therefore disclosure would be in contravention of the first principle of the UK General Data Protection Regulation. This is an absolute exemption and there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

The Board is not familiar with an Occupational Health Med no, therefore does not hold information in relation to your request.

## Indemnity Insurance

As this is personal information, pertaining to individual SMPs the Board is not in a position to provide it to you.

This personal information is exempt from disclosure to you under section 40(2) by virtue of section 40(3)(a)(i) of the FOIA. Section 40(2) allows a public authority to withhold information from a response to a request for information under the FOIA when the information requested is personal information relating to someone other than the requester and its disclosure would contravene one of the data protection principles. The first data protection principle requires personal data to be processed fairly and lawfully.

This personal data is exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) of the FOIA as, in our view, it would be unfair to provide it to you, and therefore disclosure would be in contravention of the first principle of the UK General Data Protection Regulation. This is an absolute exemption and there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

It is not appropriate for you to make contact with the SMPs as it is not in spirit of the regulations.

If you have queries about this request or the decision, please contact the Board quoting the reference number above. If you are unhappy with the service you have received and wish to make a complaint or request a review you should contact the Board's Chief Executive -

Via Email: [foi@nipolicingboard.org.uk](mailto:foi@nipolicingboard.org.uk)

Or in writing at the following address:

Northern Ireland Policing Board  
James House  
Block D  
2 – 4 Cromac Avenue  
The Gasworks  
Belfast  
BT7 2JA

You should contact the Board within 40 working days of this response.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner. Generally, the Information Commissioner's Office cannot investigate or make a decision on a case unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Board. You should make complaints to the ICO within six weeks of receiving the outcome of an internal review.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at the following web link –

[www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints](http://www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints)

or in writing at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
SK9 5AF

Telephone: - 0303 1231114  
Email: - [ni@ico.org.uk](mailto:ni@ico.org.uk)

Please be advised that Policing Board replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ [www.nipolicingboard.org.uk](http://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk).

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.