

May 2012

With regard the questions you have raised, in the first instance, I would like to reassure you the Trust's aim always to provide information requested under the provision of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, as long as the information exists and no exemptions apply.

However, with regard your questions whilst we may hold the information requested this is not recorded in a way that is easily retrievable. There is no single document containing the specific data that you have requested and our current systems are unable to provide a breakdown of data in the exact manner sought. The spend between Management Consultants and other non-Management Consultants is not held separately. To retrieve and collate the requested information would involve a manual search of a significant amount of invoices, to analyse and determine which projects the consultants were assigned to. We have estimated that this would take more than 18 hours involving costs which would exceed the appropriate fee limit of £450 set out under Freedom of Information & Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2007.

The fee limit specified in regulations for NHS trusts represents the cost of one person spending 2½ working days (at a rate of £25 per hour) to determine whether the Trust holds the information requested; then locating, retrieving and extracting that information.

Having regard to section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act, in circumstances where the fee limit is likely to be exceeded, then the Trust is not obliged to respond to the request. Accordingly, we are sorry, but on this occasion we will not be able to fully respond to your questions.

However, we can provide you the information the Trust does hold which relates to spend on ALL consultants (which includes consultants engaged on projects relating to building assignments, clinical consultancy, etc.) rather than only Management Consultants, which we trust you will find useful.

*1. How much has Southend Hospital spent on management consultants in each of the last 3 years?*

All consultants for Financial Year 2011/12 - £901,422

All consultants for Financial Year 2010/11 - £1,041,670

All consultants for Financial Year 2009/10 - £1,014,477

*2. How many times have consultants been used in each of the last three years?*

The Trust has processed significant amount of invoices relating to charges made by all consultants firms. However, this is not an indication of how many times each consultant/company has been used.

*3. How long have the contracts been with these firms and the company names?*

As explained above, we may hold the information requested in relation to responding to the question but this information is not recorded in a way that is easily retrievable.

*3. For what purposes have they been hired?*

Consultants can be hired for a number of reasons including advising on planned building work to recruiting very senior managers.

*5. Is there a specific budget for this and what is the annual budget?*

Generally there is no central budget held for consultancy costs, although specific budgets may exist as part of the project.

If you have any further queries or concerns then please do not hesitate to contact us.