Derry City & Strabane
District Council
Comhairle
Chathair Dhoire &
Cheantar an tSratha Báin
Derry Cittie & Stràbane
Destrick Cooncil

Ref: FOI / 6480

16th July 2026

Freedom of Information Act 2000 Request - Drug Testing Safeguards in Substance Misuse Services

I refer to your FOI request and respond as follows:

Please could you provide the following information:

1. **Does your local authority currently provide substance misuse and/or addiction recovery services — whether delivered in-house, commissioned from external providers, or a combination of both?**

   No.

   If commissioned externally, please identify the provider(s) and the contract reference(s) where possible.

   Not Applicable.

2. **Whether services are delivered in-house or by an external provider, does the applicable drug and alcohol testing policy for staff working in those services include the following safeguards:**

   a. **Engagement of an independent Medical Review Officer (MRO) or equivalent qualified professional to review positive drug test results before any disciplinary action is taken;**

      Not Applicable.

b. **Obtaining an independent toxicological opinion when a positive result may be attributable to legal substances (such as over-the-counter CBD products, prescription medication, or dietary sources);**

   Not Applicable.

c. **Offering confirmatory re-testing or independent analysis following a disputed positive result;**

   Not Applicable.

d. **Referral to Occupational Health before disciplinary proceedings are initiated on the basis of a drug test result;**

   Not Applicable.

e. **Maintenance of a written drug and alcohol testing policy that meets the standards recommended by the ACAS guidance on managing drug and alcohol misuse at work?**

   Yes

   If commissioned externally, please confirm whether these safeguards are specified in the commissioning contract or service specification, and provide the relevant clauses where possible.

   Not Applicable.

3. **Has your authority received any complaints, concerns, or whistleblowing disclosures from service users, staff, or members of the public regarding the drug testing practices of substance misuse service providers (or in-house services) in the last five years?**

If so, how many and what was the general nature of those complaints?

No

4. **Does your authority's contract monitoring or quality assurance process include any review of drug testing procedures or outcomes — whether delivered in-house or by a commissioned provider?**

   Not Applicable.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you have rights of review and appeal; these rights consist of two review processes.

Firstly, our internal review procedure is available by contacting:

John Kelpie
Chief Executive
Derry City and Strabane District Council
98 Strand Road
Derry BT48 7NN
Tel: 028 71253253 or email: john.kelpie@derrystrabane.com

Secondly, you can appeal directly by contacting the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
CHESHIRE SK9 5AF
Tel: 0303 123 1113 (local rate) or email: casework@ico.org.uk

I would however advise that the Information Commissioner has indicated that a review will not be undertaken unless the Council has first had an opportunity to re-consider its decision.

Yours sincerely

Paula Donnelly
Lead HR Officer