

Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Request Reference FoI/22/556
Medicines Dispensed

Information Requested:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 I would like to request an extract of the hospital medicines usage data held by Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, detailing the volume of drugs dispensed by hospital pharmacies and homecare, at an individual product level. Please note that this request is for aggregated medicines usage data, and explicitly does not require any patient-level or patient-identifiable data.

Please could you provide a report containing data against the following fields, in .csv format, for each month, covering the most recent available data month and all previous months if possible back to January 2019 (in line with the data published by NHS BSA on behalf of NHS England). Please include records for all dispensed products. England reports products at SNOMED VPID level, however a lower level of drug code is preferred if available in the following order of preference: APPID, APID, VPPID, VPID.

Fields requested:

Dispensing Date (Year/Month)
Health Board identifier
Hospital site identifier (if available)
Drug code
Drug name
Volume dispensed
Volume Unit of measurement
Indicative cost (if available)

Response details:

Please see the attached spreadsheets.

Please note:

After considering your request, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (the UHB) considers the costs of these medicines to be exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Section 43) Commercial Interests. This section of the Act sets out an exemption from the right to know if:

- the information requested is a trade secret, or
- release of the information is likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person. (A person may be an individual, a company, the public authority itself or any other legal entity).

This exemption was considered by the UHB when deciding whether to disclose information because it considered that in doing so there could be a significant risk in prejudicing the commercial interests of both Cardiff University and the UHB. As this is a qualified exemption, the UHB is required to complete a public interest test in deciding whether it is in the public's interest to withhold or disclose the information.

In favour of disclosure: There is a public interest in transparency and in the accountability of spending of public funds. Furthermore, it is in the public's interest that public funds be used effectively and that public sector bodies obtain the best value for money when contracting for the provision of services.

Against disclosure: It has been established that releasing the information sought under the Freedom of Information Act, to which the UHB is subject, will give an unfair advantage to the supplier's competitors. There is a risk of disclosure prejudicing the commercial interests of the UHB by affecting its bargaining position with suppliers. This in turn could lead to less effective use of public funds in future. The UHB believes that there is wider established public interest in suppliers not being prejudiced merely because they have contracted with a public sector body (as upheld in ICO decision notice FS50473543 ICO v Royal Marsden Hospital Trust).

Decision: The UHB considers that the public interest in withholding the information is greater than the interests in disclosing it and thereby giving unfair commercial advantage to competitors of the supplier to which this information concerns. The UHB believes that disclosure of information in a manner which fails to protect the interests and relationships arising in a commercial context could have the effect of discouraging companies from dealing with the Health Board because of fears that the disclosure of information could damage them commercially. In turn this could then jeopardise the Health Board's ability to compete fairly and pursue its function to bring forward development in the area and obtain value for money. It was therefore decided that it was not in the public's interest to disclose this information.