

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Request Reference FoI/24/304

Audiology

Information Requested:

To better understand how your trust deals with audiology services, **please clarify whether your Health Board provides these services:**

- a. **In-house** (i.e. delivered in your Health Board or provided by another NHS organisation)
- b. **Outsourced** (i.e. delivered by an independent provider in **their** care setting)
- c. **Insourced** (i.e. delivered by an independent provider in **your** care setting)

Additionally, **please provide the following data** for your Health Board and **for each financial year** 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, and 2023/24:

Hearing assessments

1. How many patients had a hearing assessment within the following settings **and** what was the total spending in £ on treating these patients (where possible please could you give the data **per** independent provider contracted):
 - a. **In-house**
 - b. **Outsourced**
 - c. **Insourced**

Hearing aid fittings

1. How many patients had a hearing aid fitting assessment within the following settings **and** what was the total spending in £ on treating these patients (where possible please could you give the data **per** independent provider contracted):
 - a. **In-house**
 - b. **Outsourced**
 - c. **Insourced**

Hearing aid aftercare

1. How many patients had hearing aid aftercare performed within the following settings **and** what was the total spending in £ on treating these patients (where possible please could you give the data **per** independent provider contracted):
 - a. **In-house**
 - b. **Outsourced**
 - c. **Insourced**

Hearing aid devices

1. How many hearing aid devices were delivered to patients within the following settings **and** what was the total spend £ on hearing aid devices for these patients in (where possible please could you give the data **per** independent provider contracted):
 - a. **In-house**
 - b. **Outsourced**
 - c. **Insourced**

Other

1. Could you please provide a copy of the service specification given to all bidders for when the contract for hearing aid services was last advertised?

If any of the specific splits are not available, please provide **total figures** for the system and specify which main splits are recorded by your Health Board (in-house / independent sector).

Response Details:

In completing a search for the information requested, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (the UHB) has confirmed that this information is not centrally recorded or collated. To retrieve the information requested would require a manual search through individual records and the UHB considers that this would exceed the limit set within the Appropriate Limit and Fees Regulations 2004. The UHB has therefore relied upon the section 12 exemption of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA 2000) ('Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit') and is refusing your request for the following reasons.

It should first be noted that multiple requests within a single item of correspondence are considered separate requests for the purposes of section 12(4) of the FOIA 2000, as confirmed in *Fitzsimmons v Information Commissioner* [2008] UKIT EA/2007/0124.

When a public authority is estimating whether the appropriate limit is likely to be exceeded for the purposes of regulation 5 of the Fees Regulations as prescribed by section 12(4) of the FOIA 2000, it can include the costs of complying with two or more requests if these are:

- made by one person, or by different persons who appear to the public authority to be acting in concert or in pursuance of a campaign; and
- received by the public authority within any period of 60 working days.

Since all of these requests were sent by the same individual and received on 13 May 2024, the UHB believes these conditions to be satisfied.

Regulation 5(2) of the Fees Regulations equally requires that aggregated requests relate 'to any extent' to the same or similar information. This test is likely to be met where requests possess an overarching theme

or have a common thread running between them with respect to the nature of the information sought. And since each of the requests relates to audiology services, the UHB considers the requirement of similar information sought to be met due to the common themes present.

The UHB has estimated that to complete the work needed to respond to the aggregated requests would exceed the time limit as set within the Fees Regulations to respond to a request made under the FOIA 2000. Under the Act there is an allowance of two and a half days, or 18 hours, to comply with a request and the cost limit set within the Fees Regulations for this amount of work is £450 for the UHB. The Fees Regulations specify that the cost of complying with a request must be calculated at the rate of £25 per hour.

In light of the above considerations, the UHB is refusing your requests for information in accordance with section 12(4) of the FOIA 2000.