

Reference:	FOI.19263.26
Subject:	Chicken pox hospitalisations
Date of Request:	8 January 2026

Requested:

1. Please can you provide data for the past ten years on chicken pox hospitalisations within your health board hospitals, specifically:-
 - a. Total number of hospitalisations for each year from 2015-2025 (or if data not yet available for 2025, 2014-2024).
 - b. Ages of patients hospitalised and whether they already had underlying health conditions.
 - c. Were any patients sent to ICU?
 - d. Did any patients die from chicken pox? If so what were the ages and did they have underlying health conditions?

Response:

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) regrets to inform you that it does not hold the information requested for question 1d, as the cause of death and any contributing factors is determined by the coroner, who is appointed by the Local Authority (LA). We therefore recommend that you redirect this part of your request to the Freedom of Information Teams within each LA in the UHB's footprint, who may be able to help you with your enquiry. Their contact details are set out overleaf:

- Information & Data Protection Officer, Carmarthenshire County Council, County Hall, Carmarthen, SA31 1JP or by email foia@carmarthenshire.gov.uk
- Complaints & Freedom of Information Team, Ceredigion County Council, Canolfan Rheidol, Rhodfa Padarn, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3UE or by email foi@ceredigion.gov.uk
- Information Governance Team, Pembrokeshire County Council, County Hall, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA61 1TP or by email FOI@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

The UHB is unable to provide you with all the information requested, as it is estimated that the cost of answering your request would exceed the "appropriate limit" as stated in the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. The "appropriate limit" represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours (or 2 ½ working days) in determining whether the UHB holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

The UHB's Welsh Patient Administration System (WPAS) does not hold a central record of data for the 2015 calendar year, as it only holds the data for a ten (10) year period. Therefore, to provide you with all the information for question 1a, the UHB would be required to undertake a manual search of all patient admission records for the 2015 calendar year, to identify the information that would fulfil this part of your request.

Additionally, in order to provide you with all the information for question 1b, the UHB would need to manually scrutinise the patient records of those admitted due to being diagnosed with chicken pox, to identify if any had underlying health conditions, as this information is not recorded centrally.

The UHB can confirm that two hundred and nineteen (219) patients were admitted with a diagnosis of chicken pox during the period 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2025. It is estimated that a manual search of these records would exceed the 18 hours stipulated within the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA). Based on the number of records identified, conducting a search of patient records taking a minimum of five (5) minutes per digital record, would exceed the 'appropriate limit', costing the UHB the following:

219 @ 5 minutes per record = 18 hours and 10 minutes
18 hours and 10 minutes @ £25 per hour = £454.18

The UHB is therefore applying an exemption under Section 12 of the FoIA, which provides an exemption from a public authority's obligation to comply with a request for information where the cost of compliance is estimated to exceed the appropriate limit.

However, under Section 16 of the FoIA, we are required as a public authority, to provide advice and assistance so far as it is reasonable to individuals who have made a request under the FoIA, this can include assisting a requestor to further refine their request.

The UHB suggests that you may refine your request by reducing the timeframe requested. However, the UHB would still be required to undertake a manual search of patient records to identify any information to fulfil your request, and therefore, the outcome may be the same.

Additionally, the UHB is unable to provide you with some of the requested information as there is a potential risk of identifying individuals if this was disclosed. The UHB is therefore withholding the following details under Section 40(2) of the FoIA:

- The figures in the table for question 1a have been replaced with an asterisk (*) due to the low number of cases (less than 5)
- The information requested for question 1b, due to the low number of cases (less than 5)

Additionally, it is not within the expectation of these individuals that their personal data would be released into the public domain. This information is classed as personal data of a third party. Therefore, it is being withheld in accordance with the exemption set out in section 40(2) of the FoIA, by virtue of section 40(3)(a) of the FoIA, which permits a public authority to withhold personal data other than the requestor's where the disclosure would breach Data Protection principles.

This information is protected by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)/UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR), as its disclosure would constitute unfair and unlawful processing and would be contrary to the principles and articles of the UK GDPR. This exemption is absolute and therefore, there is no requirement to apply the public interest test.

In reaching this decision, the DPA and UK GDPR define personal data as data that relates to a living individual who can be identified solely from that data or from that data and other information, which is in the possession of the data controller.

However, the UHB provides the accessible information it holds overleaf.

1a. An exemption under Section 12 of the FoIA applied to the information requested for the 2015 calendar year. Under Section 16, the UHB provides, within the table below, the number of patients admitted with a diagnosis of chicken pox, by the 2016 to 2025 calendar years.

Calendar year	Number
2016	18
2017	30
2018	30
2019	10
2020	*

Calendar year	Number
2021	*
2022	23
2023	39
2024	25
2025	37

1b. An exemption under Section 40 has been applied to the age of the patients and an exemption under Section 12 has been applied to the number of patients with underlying health conditions.

1c. The UHB confirms that none of the patients admitted with a diagnosis of chicken pox were transferred to the Intensive Therapy Unit (ITU), during the 2016 to 2025 calendar years.