

<b>Reference:</b>	FOI.6101.21
<b>Subject:</b>	False positive COVID-19 RT PCR tests
<b>Date of Request:</b>	28 May 2021

**Requested:**

I would like to make a Freedom of Information request regarding the incidence of false positive COVID-19 RT PCR test results within HDUHB, and also specifically Pembrokeshire, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Response:**

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with the information requested, as it is estimated that the cost of answering your request would exceed the “appropriate level” as stated in the Freedom of Information (Fees and Appropriate Limit) Regulations 2004. The “appropriate level” represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours (or 2 ½ working days) in determining whether the UHB holds the information, as well as locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

There is no scientific way of detecting whether a positive RT-PCR test is a true or false positive result. In the vast majority of cases, a positive result will be treated as such, with the individual being advised to self-isolate and his/her contacts being traced and advised to be tested. Where symptoms are present or asymptomatic cases return a positive test result, the validity would not be questioned.

For specific cases/circumstances, where there is a belief that the result is likely to be false and/or it is deemed to be of benefit to repeat the test, an assessment of facts will be undertaken on a case by case basis by the Regional Response Cell, which includes Public Health Specialists.

In such circumstances, a repeat RT-PCR test may be undertaken and if negative, a reasonable assumption can be made that the first test was a false positive. As such cases are dealt with on an individual basis, there are no single factors that would enable an easy search of the results database.

Therefore, in order to provide you with the requested information, the UHB would need to undertake a manual trawl of all COVID-19 positive records, to identify any information that may fulfil your request, as this information is not recorded centrally.

The UHB is therefore applying an exemption under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (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.