

Reference:	FOI.17830.25
Subject:	Histology and cellular pathology services
Date of Request:	6 July 2025

Requested:

For the period April 1st to December 2024, please provide the following information:

1. How many whole time equivalent histopathology consultants (as defined by being on the GMC specialist register for pathology) were employed by the authority at 31/12/2024.
2. How many histology cases were reported in the following period, overall and by the following sub-specialties:
 - a. Dermatology
 - b. gastro-intestinal
 - c. urology
 - d. gynaecology
 - e. breast
 - f. thoracic
 - g. head and neck
 - h. other
 - i. total cases reported
3. How many of the total cases given above were reported by:
 - a. consultants (or other medical staff) employed by the authority during their contract Programmed Activities or PAs.
 - b. consultants employed by the authority, being paid additional amounts over and above their salary for additional work.
 - c. locum consultants working for the authority
 - d. external reporting companies.
4. Please provide a total number of cases and the number reported by each of the following:
 - a. Unilabs
 - b. HCA Laboratories including their subsidiary Backlogs
 - c. SBS (Source Bioscience/LD Path)
 - d. Cellular Pathology Services Limited
 - e. Diagnexia
 - f. Digital Pathology Partners
 - g. Cytel
 - h. Poundbury Cancer Institute
 - i. Medica
 - j. external reporting companies total
5. How much did the authority spend on each of the following during the period:
 - a. consultants (or other medical staff) employed by the authority during their contract Programmed Activities or PAs. (salary plus NI plus pension contribution)
 - b. consultants employed by the authority, being paid additional amounts over and above their salary for additional work.
 - c. locum consultants working for the authority
 - d. external reporting companies.

6. Please provide a total spend and the spend with each of the following:
 - a. Unilabs
 - b. HCA Laboratories including their subsidiary Backlogs
 - c. SBS (Source Bioscience/LD Path)
 - d. Cellular Pathology Services Limited
 - e. Diagnexia
 - f. Digital Pathology Partners
 - g. Cytel
 - h. Poundbury Cancer Institute
 - i. Medica
 - j. external reporting companies total
7. Please provide TATs for:
 - a. Molecular testing services for NHS histopathology work
 - b. Reporting histopathology in cancer cases
 - i. Please provide list of fines paid for missing cancer TAT targets
8. Please provide current backlog of cancer services, by volume and speciality?

Response:

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with all of the information requested for question 3 of your request, 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.

To provide you with the information requested, the UHB would need to contact each sub-speciality department listed in question 2 and then undertake a manual trawl of all patient records, to identify any information that may fulfil your request, as this information is not recorded centrally.

The UHB can confirm that it has a total of thirty-eight thousand seven hundred and thirty-three (38,733) histology cases recorded during the time period requested. Therefore, to provide you with the exact information being requested for question 3, conducting the search would far exceed the 'appropriate limit', estimated to cost the UHB the following:

38,733 @ 5 minutes per item = 3,227.75 hours
3,227.75 hours @ £25 per hour = £80,693.75

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.

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 requester to further refine their request.

Having considered your request you may wish to refine it further by selecting specific speciality areas you wish to obtain information for, such as only head and neck or breast etc; over a shorter time period, which would reduce the sample size.

Aside from the Section 12 exemption detailed above, the UHB provides the accessible information it holds for your further questions, below.

1. Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) can advise that it employed nine (9) Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) Histopathology Consultants, with a further six (6) Consultants showing their secondary area of work as Histopathology, as at 31 December 2024.
2. The UHB provides within the table below, the number of histology cases reported overall, and by sub-specialities, between 1 April and 31 December 2024.

Specialities	Number
Dermatology	7,500
Gastro-intestinal	13,400
Urology	4,650
Gynaecology	5,200
Breast	1,671
Thoracic	0
Head and neck	1,133
Other	5,179
Total cases reported	38,733

3. The UHB has applied a section 12 exemption to your request.
4. The UHB can inform you that zero (0) cases were reported by external companies between 1 April and 31 December 2024.
- 5a. The UHB provides within the table below, its spend on employed Medical staff during their contract Programmed Activities (PA's), broken down by grade, for the period 1 April to 31 December 2024.

Grade	Pay
Consultant	£33,108,360.22
Associate Specialist	£2,997,236.10
Specialist Grade	£71,836.02
Specialist Doctor	£15,359,072.99
Specialist Registrar	£7,894,796.84
F2	£3,921,494.58
F1	£3,589,748.56
Clinical Assistant	£63,926.65
GP Sessions	£8,524,251.22

- 5b. The UHB provides within the table below, it's spend on employed Consultants for additional work over and above their salary, for the period 1 April to 31 December 2024.

Grade	Pay
Consultant	£611,937.55

5c. The UHB provides within the table below, it's spend on Locum Consultants working for the authority between 1 April 2024 and 31 December 2024.

Grade	Pay
Consultant	£2,269,633.40

5d. The UHB confirms it did not utilise external reporting companies for Histology and Cellular Pathology services, between 1 April and 31 December 2024.

6. As per response to question 5d, the UHB confirms that it did not utilise external reporting companies between 1 April and 31 December 2024.

7a. The UHB regrets to inform you that it does not hold the information requested. All molecular testing is undertaken by the All-Wales Medical Genomics Service (AWMGS). Which is delivered regionally via Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (CVUHB). Therefore, we recommend that you redirect this part of your request to the Freedom of Information Team at CVUHB, who may be able to help you further, their contact details are as follows:

FOI.Requests@wales.nhs.uk or alternatively, you can contact: Freedom of Information Team, Woodland House, Maes-y-Coed Road, Cardiff, CF14 4TT

7b. The UHB can inform you that the turnaround times (TATs) for reporting histopathology in cancer cases is 8 days.

7b.(i) The UHB can inform you that it has not received any fines for missing cancer TAT targets.

8. The UHB provides within the table below the current patient waiting lists within cancer services by speciality as of 30 June 2025.

Specialty	Number
Head & Neck	9
Lung	51
Upper Gastrointestinal	25
Lower Gastrointestinal	128
Skin	10
Breast	13
Gynaecology	40
Urology	199
Haem	8
Unknown Primary	*
Brain	0
Sarcoma	6
Other	*
Children	0

Where the figures in the table have been replaced with an asterisk (*), the UHB is unable to provide you with the exact number of patients due to the low number of cases (less than 5), as there is a potential risk of identifying individuals if this was disclosed. The UHB is therefore withholding this

detail under Section 40(2) of the FoIA. This information is protected by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)/UK General Data Protection Regulations, 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 defines 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.