

Reference:	FOI.20321.26
Subject:	Interpreting services
Date of Request:	29 April 2026

Requested:

Please provide the following information for the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026:

1. Does the Health Board record whether a patient is Deaf, hard of hearing, or a British Sign Language (BSL) user?
 - a. If yes, please state how this information is recorded (e.g. categories used, patient record systems).
2. How many patients are currently recorded as
 - a. Deaf
 - b. Hard of hearing
 - c. Deaf blind
 - d. BSL users?
3. Does the Health Board record Deaf patients' communication needs (e.g. requirement for a BSL interpreter)?
 - a. If yes, how?
 - b. If yes, are these needs automatically flagged for future appointments?
4. Does the Health Board provide professional BSL interpreters for Deaf patients across all its services?
 - a. Please confirm whether this includes mental health and hospital appointments.
5. Please provide the total number of BSL interpreter bookings made in each year during the period.
6. In the same period, how many appointments involving Deaf patients took place where a BSL interpreter was:
 - a. Requested
 - b. Provided
 - c. Requested but not provided
7. Does the Health Board have a written policy or guidance relating to accessible communication or working with Deaf patients?
8. Do you offer alternative methods to telephone communication for deaf people when contacting your service? If so, please specify which methods are available.

Response:

1. Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) confirms that it does record if a patient has 'sensory loss' via the Welsh Patient Administration System (WPAS). However, it does not record the name of the specific sensory loss e.g. deaf.

- a. The patients preferred method of communication support is recorded on WPAS, rather than their specific sensory loss (such as deaf, hard of hearing), as this is the information required to ensure patients receive the specific communication support needed.
2. The UHB does not hold the information exactly as requested, please see response to question 1. However, the UHB can confirm that a total of two hundred and two (202) patients had 'sensory loss' recorded on the WPAS, during the 2025/26 financial year. A breakdown of the patient's preferred communication support method has been provided within the table below.

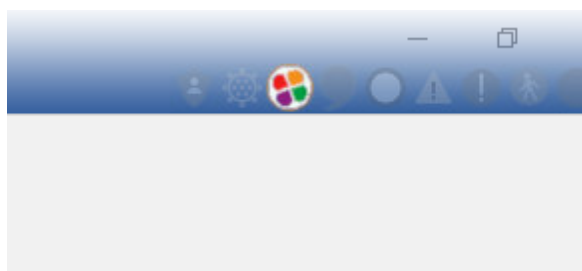
Communication support	Number
Hearing aid user	186
British Sign Language (BSL) user	*
Lip read	*
Makaton interpreter	*
Deafblind intervener	0
Other i.e. easy read or carer/advocate	11
Total	202

Where the figures in the tables 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 Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA). 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

3a. Please see responses to questions 1 and 2.

3b. Where a sensory loss is recorded it is automatically flagged on the patient's demographic page in WPAS, where an icon is highlighted or visible. A screenshot of the highlighted icon has been provided below.



4a. The UHB does provide professional BSL interpreters for deaf patients across all its services, including mental health services and hospital appointments.

5. & 6. The UHB provides within the table below, a breakdown of the BSL requests made during the 2025/26 financial year.

Question	Number
a. Requested	72
b. Provided	66
c. Requested and not provided	6

7. The UHB provides copies of its policy and the guidance relating to accessible communication utilised Health Board wide, at the following attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Policy 863 – Interpretation and Translation Policy
- Attachment 2 – Enhancing Communication: Guide to accessing Interpretation and Translation Services
- Attachment 3 – Wales Council of the Blind - Making meetings accessible for people with sensory loss
- Attachment 4 – Diverse Cymru – Advice Guide: Making Documents Accessible

8. The UHB confirms that some of its services across the UHB offer contact via SMS text, online forms and direct email, with Relay UK also being used.