

Reference:	FOI.744.19
Subject:	Inventories for Bronglais General Hospital (BGH)
Date of Request:	10 May 2019

Requested

I am writing for information of the individual cost and the amount of items that have been bought for the use of various treatments and procedures, for Bronglais General Hospital, Caradog Road, Aberystwyth, SY231ER.

Would it be possible for you to send a link, or the entire documentation of details regarding the inventory and cost of the items preferably by email (such as pdf documentation)?

Response:

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with the information requested regarding hospital inventories 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, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

Within Bronglais General Hospital all wards and departments are responsible for their own stock ordering, ordering is completed using Oracle, the UHB's procurement system. The UHB's central stores holds stocks of regularly used items and when an item is ordered delivery is prioritised based on usage, quantity ordered and departmental spending. To provide stock inventories of wards, theatres and pharmacies would require individual scrutinisation of records per department which collectively would exceed the 'appropriate limit' as stated within the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You have also requested costs based upon medical procedures to include any medication, anaesthesia and oxygen. The UHB is unable to fulfil this aspect of your request as each clinical procedure is carried out based upon individual clinical need. It would not be possible to state that a tonsillectomy performed on one patient would require exactly the same equipment, time and medication as another patient as there could be underlying medical conditions which would require additional medication, or an unexpected bleed which would require a second visit to theatre. Unfortunately, the UHB does not yet cost individual procedures due to the number of variables involved which would not allow for consistent costing.

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

Additionally, the UHB is applying a section 43 exemption to the part of your request that relates to the individual cost prices of inventory items. Section 43(2) exempts information, disclosure of which would or would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person, in this case the suppliers listed above. Commercial interests may be prejudiced where disclosure would, or would be likely to:

- Weaken a company's position in a competitive environment by revealing market sensitive information or information of potential usefulness to its competitors.
- Damage a company's business reputation or the confidence that customers/users, suppliers or investors may have in it.

This exemption is qualified; therefore, even if information falls within Section 43, public authorities must then apply the public interest test set out in Section 2(2)(b). The information can only be withheld if the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

The UHB has therefore considered the following:

In favour of disclosure:-There is a public interest in transparency and in the accountability of public funds. Furthermore, it is in the public's interest that public funds be used effectively and that public sector bodies obtain the best value for money when contracting for the provision of services. Private sector bodies engaging in commercial activities with the public sector must expect some information about those activities to be disclosed.

Against Disclosure:- Disclosure of this information would have a direct impact and cause substantial harm to the suppliers listed as it would disclose their pricing and products/services provided to the UHB, and it would be likely that this would damage their ability to work within a highly competitive sector. The information being requested is likely to be used by their competitors to gain a competitive advantage.

It has therefore been decided above that releasing the information under the Freedom of Information Act, to which the UHB is subject, will give an unfair advantage to the suppliers' competitors. The UHB believes that there is wider established public interest in companies not being prejudiced merely because they have contracted with a public sector body, and that there is a public interest in ensuring that there is competition for public sector contracts.

Decision:-The UHB considers that the public interest in withholding the individual prices on inventory items is greater than the interests in disclosing it and thereby giving unfair commercial advantage to competitors of the company to which this information concerns.