

Reference:	FOI.20833.26
Subject:	Lead poisoning
Date of Request:	24 June 2026

Requested:

Lead poisoning cases in Ceredigion/West Wales

1. I was wondering whether Hywel Dda University Health Board was able to share any information on:
 - a. the number of individuals in the region recorded with elevated blood lead levels over the past decade - so between 2015 and 2025
 - b. as well as the number of blood lead tests performed each year by healthcare professionals

Response:

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with all the information requested for question 1b, 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.

In order to identify the number of blood lead tests performed, the UHB would need to undertake a manual trawl of each blood test requested for the 2015 to 2025 calendar years, to identify any information that may fulfil this part of your request, as the data is not centrally recorded.

The UHB can confirm that two hundred and eighty-five (285) people were recorded as having elevated blood lead levels, during the 2015 to 2025 calendar years. It is typical that not all requested blood tests will return elevated levels and so based on this assumption and the need for a manual trawl to identify relevant blood test requests. It is anticipated 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 285 records for elevated levels identified, conducting a search of digital records taking a minimum of five (5) minutes per digital record, would far exceed the “appropriate limit”, costing the UHB the at least the following:

285 @ 5 minutes per record = 23 hours and 45 minutes
 23 hours and 45 minutes @ £25 per hour = £593.75

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, which can include assisting a requestor to further refine their request.

The UHB suggests that you may refine your request by reducing the timeframe requested to a six (6) month period. However, the UHB would still be required to undertake a manual trawl of all blood test requests, to identify those requesting blood lead levels. Therefore, the outcome would be dependent on the number of records identified within a shorter time period.

1a. Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) confirms that two hundred and eighty-five (285) people were recorded as having elevated blood lead levels, during the 2015 to 2025 calendar years.

1b. An exemption under Section 12 of the FoIA has been applied. Under Section 16, the UHB provides within the table below the number of tests returned with an elevated blood lead level, by acute hospital, during the 2015 to 2025 calendar years.

Calendar year	Bronglais General Hospital	Glangwili General Hospital	Prince Philip Hospital	Withybush General Hospital
2015	8	13	*	13
2016	*	12	*	8
2017	*	6	*	6
2018	7	9	5	*
2019	12	10	*	0
2020	6	*	5	*
2021	*	*	*	8
2022	5	9	*	10
2023	8	19	*	10
2024	8	31	*	6
2025	*	11	*	0
Total	65	125	31	64

Where the figures in the table have been replaced with an asterisk (*), the UHB is unable to provide you with the exact number 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 (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.