

Reference:	FOI.16624.25
Subject:	Mental Health Services
Date of Request:	17 February 2025

Requested:

1. If no dedicated bipolar care pathway exists, what steps have been taken to ensure that existing pathways (such as EIP) are accessible and suitable for individuals with bipolar?
2. How many staff members in your health board have received specific training on bipolar care in the past five years?
3. What is the current average waiting time for individuals with bipolar to receive care following referral?
4. What plans does your health board have to improve early diagnosis and intervention for bipolar over the next five years?

Response:

1. Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) confirms that there is no dedicated bipolar care pathway. However, all patients diagnosed with or suspected to have bipolar can access care through its Mental Health Services which are progressing to needs led, rather than diagnosis led approaches. Service Specifications have been developed with reference to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines, including clinical guidelines for bipolar disorder.
2. There is no specific training that staff are required to attend for bipolar care, however, staff do receive training on a range of topics (for example risk management) that are relevant to supporting the needs of someone living with bipolar disorder. All clinical staff are required to adhere to the NICE guidelines.
3. The UHB confirms that bipolar wait times are managed in accordance with all secondary care referrals for Mental Health. If a referral is urgent, the patient will be offered an assessment within four hours, and this will then reduce to 24 to 72 hours in accordance with the Mental Health UK Triage scale. Additionally, if it is a routine referral, the patient will be offered an assessment within 28 days.
4. The UHB is developing a clinical audit cycle in accordance with NICE guidelines to be assured and evidence that individuals are assessed, diagnosed and receive the recommended monitoring requirements when prescribed medication to treat bipolar.