

Reference:	FOI.17126.25
Subject:	NHS Trusts buying and supplying Paracetamol and ibuprofen
Date of Request:	17 April 2025

Requested:

Please include the following information for the financial years 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25:

1. The total number of individual patients to whom paracetamol and ibuprofen were prescribed by your Trust annually.
2. The total amount spent by your Trust on supplying prescribed paracetamol and Ibuprofen in each of those financial years.
3. If available, a breakdown of the form in which paracetamol was prescribed (e.g., tablets, capsules, liquid suspension, etc.) and associated costs for each form.
4. What are the specific conditions which qualify a patient to be prescribed paracetamol or ibuprofen? Or what is your general policy for qualifying a prescription for paracetamol or ibuprofen?

Response:

1. Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with all of the information requested, 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 and the Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. The “appropriate limit” represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours (or 2½ working days) in determining whether the UHB holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

The UHB’s Pharmacy and Medicines Management team only hold records of items dispensed from the Secondary Care pharmacies. Paracetamol and Ibuprofen are regularly stocked on most hospital wards and are therefore not recorded in the same way as medication dispensed for outpatients or patients being discharged. Therefore, to provide you with the information requested, the UHB would need to undertake a manual trawl of all patient records, to identify patients who have been prescribed with Paracetamol and or Ibuprofen on the ward as this information is not recorded centrally.

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, the UHB has a duty to provide advice and assistance. Therefore, the UHB provides within the table below the number of patients within secondary care directly prescribed with either Paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen during the time period requested.

Financial Year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Number of Patients	4,435	4,569	4,498

2. The UHB provides within the table below the total amount spent by the UHB on Paracetamol and Ibuprofen during the time period requested.

It should be noted that the figures provided include the total spend in secondary care and primary care.

Financial Year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25*
Total Cost	£858,784.78	£916,882.06	£811,602.26

*Primary care data provided only from April 2024 to January 2025

3. The UHB provides within the table overleaf a breakdown of the form in which Paracetamol was prescribed and associated costs during the time period requested.

It should be noted that the figures provided include the total spend in secondary care and primary care managed practices.

Financial Year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25*
Paracetamol (Calpol infant sachets) 120 mg in 5mL Oral Suspension Sugar Free	£335.88	£364.19	£215.12
Paracetamol 1g in 100mL Intravenous Infusion	£49,213.02	£74,133.70	£68,978.23
Paracetamol 1g Suppositories	£3,621.54	£2,712.48	£1,949.78
Paracetamol 120 mg in 5mL Oral Liquid	£5,599.49	£8,156.54	£6,088.40
Paracetamol 120 mg Suppositories	£3,132.35	£3,324.97	£2,386.51
Paracetamol 125 mg Suppositories	£783.54	£491.06	£524.89
Paracetamol 240 mg Suppositories	£2,650.94	£2,231.88	£1,637.06
Paracetamol 250 mg in 5mL Oral Liquid	£137,895.51	£155,083.68	£187,869.15
Paracetamol 250 mg Oro-dispersible Tablets	£133.05	£80.93	£86.78
Paracetamol 250 mg Suppositories	£1,178.52	£1,421.26	£1,219.92
Paracetamol 500 mg Capsules	£26,602.34	£25,874.38	£20,111.41
Paracetamol 500 mg Effervescent Tablets	£44,349.97	£45,640.78	£48,130.14
Paracetamol 500 mg in 50mL Intravenous Infusion	£2,776.40	£4,332.61	£4,607.14
Paracetamol 500 mg Suppositories	£12,915.82	£20,471.09	£15,679.35
Paracetamol 500 mg Tablets	£376,085.86	£386,535.69	£300,084.17
Paracetamol 60 mg Suppositories	£215.68	£11.95	£28.68
Paracetamol 500 mg in 5mL Oral Liquid	£22,928.61	£19,610.43	£17,860.66
Paracetamol (Calpol infant sachets) 250 mg in 5mL Oral Suspension Sugar Free	£6.32	£0.00	£3.67
Paracetamol 80 mg Suppositories	£0.00	£0.00	£0.27
Paracetamol 1g Tablets	£119.91	£248.12	£142.70
Paracetamol 1g Effervescent Tablets	£360.22	£435.68	£224.71
Total Cost	£690,904.98	£751,161.44	£677,828.72

*primary care data provided only from April 2024 to January 2025

4. The UHB does not have a specific policy detailing the conditions qualifying a patient to be prescribed Paracetamol or Ibuprofen. General encouragement is given to patients to purchase simple analgesics over the counter and to have these available at home.

However, if patients do not have a supply of Paracetamol or Ibuprofen at home, then Paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen are supplied on discharge from hospital.