

<b>Reference:</b>	FOI.5167.21
<b>Subject:</b>	Ophthalmology waiting times
<b>Date of Request:</b>	29 January 2021

**Requested:**

1. What were the average waiting times in the latter half of 2015 for a routine ophthalmology appointment at Aberystwyth Eye Centre following referral from a patient's high street optometrist?
2. If the hospital received a routine referral in August 2015 for a patient with a history of trauma to the eye 18 months previously (being hit by a ball bearing) flashes of light for 3 months, no floaters, no curtains/veils with a visual acuity of 6/5 in both eyes and a normal examination with the presence of some synchaie, how would the referral have been prioritised and how soon would the patient have been seen?

**Response:**

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

In order to provide you with the requested information, the UHB would need to undertake a manual trawl of ophthalmology patient referrals, to identify any information that fulfils your request, 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.

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 FOIA.

The UHB confirms that the average waiting time for a routine ophthalmology appointment at North Road Clinic was 54.5 days, during the period 1 July to 31 December 2015.

2. All referrals are assessed on a patient's individual clinical needs. The UHB can only provide information that is held and cannot provide advice, opinion or information based on hypothetical situations. Therefore, this part of your request does not fall within the scope of a Freedom of Information request.

The FoIA provides public access to information held by public authorities. It does this in two (2) ways:

- public authorities are obliged to publish certain information about their activities; and
- members of the public are entitled to request information from public authorities.

The Act covers any recorded information that is held by a public authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and by UK-wide public authorities based in Scotland. Information held by Scottish public authorities is covered by Scotland's own Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

Public authorities include government departments, local authorities, the NHS, state schools and police forces. However, the Act does not necessarily cover every organisation that receives public money. For example, it does not cover some charities that receive grants and certain private sector organisations that perform public functions.

Recorded information includes printed documents, computer files, letters, emails, photographs, and sound or video recordings.

The Act does not give people access to their own personal data (information about themselves) such as their health records or credit reference file. If a member of the public wants to see information that a public authority holds about them, they should make a data protection subject access request.

Further information can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website and can be accessed via the attached link.

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-freedom-of-information/>