

Reference:	FOI.12479.23
Subject:	Orthopaedic operations
Date of Request:	21 August 2023

Requested:

- 1) How many patients like me, are waiting for three full joint replacements (in my case left hip and both knees) within the Hywel Dda Health Board area as of now?
- 2) What are the clinical definitions of Priorities 1, 2, 3 & 4?
- 3) Since the Covid restrictions were lifted, the level of orthopaedic operations up to now remains very low. I am informed that Hywel Dda does not use the private sector for orthopaedics so what has happened to the orthopaedic budget?

Response:

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.

In order to provide you with the information requested for question 1, the UHB would be required to undertake a manual trawl of all patients’ notes that are on the orthopaedic waiting list, to identify how many are waiting for three (3) full joint replacements, as this information is not recorded centrally.

However, the UHB can confirm that there are five thousand seven hundred and five (5,705) patients awaiting orthopaedic procedures, as at 22 August 2023. Therefore, to provide you with the exact information being requested, conducting the search would far exceed the ‘appropriate limit’, costing the UHB the following:

5,705 @ 15 minutes per item = 1,426.25 hours
1,426.25 hours @ £25 per hour = £35,656.25

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 the accessible information it holds below.

- 2) The UHB adheres to the prioritisation as set out in the ‘Clinical Guide to Surgical Prioritisation in the recovery from the Coronavirus Pandemic’ produced by the Federation of Surgical Specialty Associations (FSSA). As this information is already within the public domain, the UHB has applied an exemption under Section 21 of the FoIA, as the information is accessible by another means.

For ease of reference, the link to the FSSA website has been provided below:

- 3) The UHB confirms that it is currently undertaking inpatient and day case surgery at Bronglais General Hospital, and day case surgery only at Withybush General Hospital. In Prince Philip Hospital, inpatient orthopaedic surgery restarted on 14 March 2022 which was then temporarily suspended from 19 December 2022 to 22 January 2023 due to urgent unscheduled care site pressures.

The UHB's orthopaedic budget is being used in the same way as it was pre COVID-19 i.e. clinics are being run and clinicians paid. However, the limiting factor in terms of increasing theatre sessions for more orthopaedic surgeries to be undertaken, is due to anaesthetic and nurse staffing shortfalls. Increasing theatre sessions to pre COVID-19 levels is constantly being reviewed. Additionally, the service has not received any extra funding to outsource and utilise the private sector to reduce the waiting list backlog.