

Reference:	FOI.1586.19
Subject:	The services outsourced by our Health Board for patient communications
Date of Request:	10 September 2019

Requested

1. Do you use a Patient Appointment reminder service?
Y/N, if Yes please provide either the name of an internal PAS system or the Company name of the external provider.
2. What channels do you use to remind patients about their appointments?
For each Channel type please state annual volume and cost per unit, if you do not use a certain channel type please leave blank.
3. Do you currently offer a 'blended' appointment reminder service (use various channels until you reach a patient)? Y/N – If Y please state what combination of channels do you use and who is the provider.
4. Can Patients cancel or rearrange appointments using the reminder service? Y/N
5. When is the Appointment reminder contract due for review?
Please state review date.
6. Do you currently use Hybrid Mail? (electronic patient notifications that, via a link, directs to an online portal to retrieve letters, notifications etc)
Y/N - If Y please provide the Providers name, annual volume and cost per unit. If the system you use is internal please put internal.
7. When is the Hybrid Mail contract due for review? Please state review date.
8. Do you currently outsource your Friends and Family Test?
Y/N – Please state the name of the provider.
9. What Channels do you currently use for Friends and Family Test?
Please put a Y next to the relevant channel type used for Patient surveys and a S next to the channel type used for Staff surveys (separated by a /). Then provide the annual volume and cost paid per unit for each of Patient and Staff (separated by a /)
10. When is the Friends and Family Test contract due for review?
Please state review date.
11. Do you use any other messaging?
If used state: channel used, annual volume, cost per unit.

Response

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) has provided the answers to your questions within the table provided as requested (Attachment 1).

As the cost per unit requested from the UHB relates to third parties, the UHB has consulted with its Supplier, Healthcomm. The supplier considered Section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The UHB considers that Section 43 applies to questions 2 and 9, as answering would be Prejudicial to their Commercial Interests. Section 43(2) exempts information, disclosure of which would or would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person, in this case the supplier listed above. Commercial interests may be prejudiced where disclosure would, or would be likely to:

- Weaken a company's position in a competitive environment by revealing market sensitive information or information of potential usefulness to its competitors.
- Damage a company's business reputation or the confidence that customers/users, suppliers or investors may have in it.

This exemption is qualified; therefore, even if information falls within Section 43, public authorities must then apply the public interest test set out in Section 2(2)(b). The information can only be withheld if the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

The UHB has therefore considered the following:

In favour of disclosure: There is a public interest in transparency and in the accountability of public funds. Furthermore, it is in the public's interest that public funds be used effectively and that public sector bodies obtain the best value for money when contracting for the provision of services. Private sector bodies engaging in commercial activities with the public sector must expect some information about those activities to be disclosed.

Against Disclosure: Disclosure of this information would have a direct impact and cause substantial harm to the suppliers as it would disclose their pricing and products/services provided to the UHB, and this would be likely that this would damage their ability to work within a highly competitive sector. The information being requested is likely to be used by their competitors to gain a competitive advantage.

It has therefore been decided above that releasing the information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, to which the UHB is subject, will give an unfair advantage to the suppliers' competitors. The UHB believes that there is wider established public interest in companies not being prejudiced merely because they have contracted with a public sector body, and that there is a public interest in ensuring that there is competition for public sector contracts.

Decision:-The UHB considers that the public interest in withholding the cost per unit is greater than the interests in disclosing it and thereby giving unfair commercial advantage to competitors of the company to which this information concerns.