

<b>Reference:</b>	FOI.17694.25
<b>Subject:</b>	Patient removals from waiting lists
<b>Date of Request:</b>	3 July 2025

**Requested:**

Please provide the following data relating to Hywel Dda University Health Board for the period 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2025:

1. The total number of patients removed from NHS waiting lists due to failure to attend an appointment (DNA – Did Not Attend), failure to respond, or similar administrative reasons — broken down by:
  - a. Year (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025 YTD)
  - b. Specialty or service area (e.g. orthopaedics, dermatology, physiotherapy, etc.)
  - c. Hospital or facility (e.g. Worthybush, Glangwili, Prince Philip, etc.)
2. Of those patients removed, how many were subsequently reinstated onto the waiting list after appeal, complaint, or re-referral — again broken down by year and service area if available.
3. Copies of any internal policies, standard operating procedures, or guidelines used by the Health Board relating to:
  - a. The removal of patients from waiting lists
  - b. Communication protocols for appointment letters or cancellations
  - c. Reinstatement procedures for patients removed in error or on appeal
4. If possible, the number of formal complaints received by the Health Board since January 2020 relating specifically to:
  - a. Missed or late-arriving appointment letters
  - b. Patients being removed from lists without notice

**Response:**

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with the information requested for question 4, 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 (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 data requested, the UHB would need to undertake a manual trawl of all patient complaints to identify any that would fulfil your request. All complaints are recorded within the All-Wales Datix database (Datix) but are not categorised using the titles you have used, and so a manual trawl including the reading of all complaints relating to letters or removal from waiting lists, would need to be undertaken to identify the exact information requested.

Additionally, the UHB implemented a new complaints database in April 2021, and so the search would need to be undertaken across two different systems, which record information differently, to identify any information that meets your request.

Under its Section 16 duty to provide advice and assistance, the UHB has undertaken a keyword search within its systems for the time period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2025, which has identified

two thousand and thirty nine (2,039) complaints which relate to 'waiting', 'letter', 'cancelled' and 'communication'. It is not known at this stage whether any of these complaints meet the remit of your request exactly, and a manual search of the complaint would be required to identify any that do. Conducting the search on the complaints identified from the keyword search, would far exceed the 'appropriate limit', costing the UHB the following:

2,039 @ 5 minutes per item = 170 hours  
170 hours @ £25 per hour = £4,250

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, 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 the FoIA, this can include assisting a requestor to further refine their request.

The UHB has in this case reviewed question 4 of your request and considered it against how complaints are recorded and categorised. The team undertook a search as described within the Section 12 exemption above.

You may further refine your request by reducing the timeframe requested or by providing some other terms which the UHB may search against. However, the UHB would still be required undertake a manual search of the returned items to identify the information that exactly fits your request and so the outcome would be dependent on the number of returned items.

However, the UHB does hold some of the requested information, in addition to the data produced as a result of the keyword search and provides this below.

1. The UHB provides the requested information within Attachment 1.

Where the figures within Attachment 1 have been replaced with an asterisk (\*), the UHB is unable to provide you with the exact number of patients due to the low number of cases (less than 5), as there is a potential risk of identifying individuals if this was disclosed. The UHB has also replaced totals that could be used to calculate the redacted figure with a double asterisk (\*\*). The UHB is therefore withholding this detail under Section 40(2) of the FoIA. This information is protected by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) / UK General Data Protection Regulations, as its disclosure would constitute unfair and unlawful processing and would be contrary to the principles and articles of the UK GDPR. This exemption is absolute and therefore, there is no requirement to apply the public interest test.

In reaching this decision, the DPA and UK GDPR define personal data as data that relates to a living individual who can be identified solely from that data or from that data and other information, which is in the possession of the data controller.

2. The UHB is unable to provide you with this information as the information is not held. There are a multitude of ways in which a patient could be reinstated onto a waiting list, along with different reasons, such as a new referral, different condition, etc. Therefore, the UHB has no way of telling which patients were reinstated due to appeal, complaint or re-referral by a GP consultant.

3. The UHB provides a copy of its Patient Access Policy – Policy Number 534, at Attachment 2.
4. A section 12 exemption has been applied to this part of your request. The UHB is unable to provide the information requested as this is not a category used for reporting on Datix. Therefore, the UHB has performed a search across the complaint module using keywords close to that of what you have requested, and provides within the table overleaf, the number of complaints it received during the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2025, broken down by keyword.

<b>Keyword</b>	<b>Number</b>
'Waiting'	16
'Letter'	29
'Cancelled'	564
'Communication'	1,430
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,039</b>