

Reference:	FOI.8191.22
Subject:	Private care
Date of Request:	9 February 2022

Requested:

1. How many elective procedures (or admissions) that were due to be carried out by your NHS health board were instead carried out by a private provider in the financial years 2018-19, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-to date?
2. For the financial years stated above, what percentage of all elective procedures at your health board had to be instead carried out by a private provider?
3. For the financial years stated above, what were the most common reasons for a procedure to be carried out by a private provider – even though it was initially scheduled to be carried out by the health board?
4. If it comes within the cost limits, for Q1, which procedures were carried out by private?

Response:

1. & 2. Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with the information requested for questions 1 and 2, as it is estimated that the cost of answering your request would exceed the “appropriate limit” as stated in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. The “appropriate limit” 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 information being requested, the UHB would need to undertake a manual search of patient records, for the five (5) financial years requested, as the UHB does not have the mechanisms to identify the information that would fulfil your request, as it 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.

3. The UHB confirms that the primary reasons for the commissioning of independent sector providers would be to secure additional capacity, above that available within the UHB’s facilities. This would be in order to treat additional patients and thereby reduce both the overall volume of patients waiting and the length of the wait, during the financial years requested. However, during the 2020/21 financial year, independent sector providers were utilised as a dedicated alternative to NHS facilities during the early waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, to enable some patients to access urgent treatment within protected ‘green’ pathways, thus limiting the risk of exposure to patients with COVID-19.
4. The UHB confirms that the most commonly delivered procedures via independent sector providers, during the financial years from 2018/19 through to 2021 to date, included:

- Orthopaedics – major joint replacement surgery, foot and ankle & upper limb procedures
- Ophthalmology – cataract procedures
- Mixed General Surgery, Ear Nose and Throat (ENT), Gynaecology and Urology procedures.
- Dermatology minor procedures
- Outpatient assessments across various specialty pathways