

Reference:	FOI.14944.24
Subject:	Rheumatology waiting times
Date of Request:	26 July 2024

Requested:

My questions all relate to the 'urgent' category only. You do not need to provide information about the 'urgent (cancer)' or 'routine' categories. I would like to request the following information:

1. For Rheumatology within Hywel Dda Health Board – as at today's date or most recent recorded figures:
 - a. How many people are currently on your 'urgent' list.
 - b. Of these, how many were referred by NHS General Practitioners?
 - c. How many were referred from other sources if any?
2. For Rheumatology at Bronglais hospital – as at today's date or most recent recorded figures:
 - a. How many people are currently on your 'urgent' list.
 - b. Of these, how many were referred by NHS General Practitioners?
 - c. How many were referred from other sources, if any?
3. Does the Health Board have a current policy or guidance on how to triage/prioritise cases within this 'urgent' category at this stage? If yes, please provide a copy.

Response:

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with all of 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 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 data requested for questions 1b and 1c, the UHB would need to undertake a manual trawl of all Rheumatology referrals received for those on the urgent waiting list, to identify the information that would fulfil these parts of your request, as this information is not recorded centrally.

The UHB can confirm that there is currently one thousand two hundred and sixty-five (1,265) patients on the Rheumatology urgent waiting list. Therefore, to provide you with the exact information being requested, conducting the search would far exceed the 'appropriate limit', costing the UHB the following:

1,265 @ 15 minutes per item = 316.25 hours
 316.25 hours @ £25 per hour = £7,906.25

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, 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. Therefore, the UHB provides the accessible information it holds below.

- 1a. The UHB confirms that it has one thousand two hundred and sixty-five (1,265) patients on its Rheumatology urgent waiting list as at 28 August 2024.
2. The UHB does not hold the requested information, as it does not have a specific waiting list for Bronglais General Hospital (BGH) only. The UHB offers appointments on a next available basis across the UHB and not by location. However, the UHB tries to accommodate patients' needs and to offer appointments closer to home if they are happy to wait longer.
3. The UHB confirms that it does not hold a policy or guidance on triaging/prioritising patients. Referrals are triaged by the Consultants, based on the information provided by the referrer. The Consultant codes patients under a clinical condition, before categorising as either urgent (suspected cancer), urgent or routine; patients are then placed on the most appropriate waiting list.