

Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Request Reference Fol/18/348

Pharmacy Payments

Request Details

Please provide details of payments made to pharmacies for locally commissioned NHS or private services, for example smoking cessation, emergency hormonal contraception, supervised consumption of medicines, & needle exchange services. Please provide this in spreadsheet(s) format, with a breakdown by pharmacy (name and address), month, service, and payment, (if you also have the ODS code identifier for the pharmacy, then please kindly include this also). If possible, details of the most recent 12 months' worth of payments.

Response Details

After considering your request, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (the UHB) considers this information to be exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Section 43) Commercial Interests. This section of the Act sets out an exemption from the right to know if:

- the information requested is a trade secret, or
- release of the information is likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person. (A person may be an individual, a company, the public authority itself or any other legal entity).

This exemption was considered by the UHB when deciding whether to disclose information because it considered that doing so there could be a significant risk in prejudicing the commercial interests of the company in question. As this is a qualified exemption, the UHB is required to complete a public interest test in deciding whether it is in the public's interest to withhold or disclose the information.

In favour of disclosure: There is a public interest in transparency and in the accountability of spending 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.

Against disclosure: There is a risk of disclosure prejudicing the commercial interests of the UHB by affecting its bargaining position with agencies. This in turn could lead to less effective use of public funds in future. It has been established above that releasing the information under the Freedom of Information Act, to which the UHB is subject, will give an unfair advantage to the supplier's 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 (as upheld in ICO decision notice FS50473543 ICO v Royal Marsden Hospital Trust).

Decision: The UHB considers that the public interest in withholding the information is greater than the interests in disclosing it and thereby giving unfair commercial advantage to competitors of the supplier to which this information concerns. The UHB believes that disclosure of information in a manner which fails to protect the interests and relationships arising in a commercial context could have the effect of discouraging companies from dealing with the Health Board because of fears that the disclosure of information could damage them commercially. In turn this could then jeopardise the Health Board's ability to compete fairly and pursue its function to bring forward development in the area and obtain value for money. It was therefore decided that it was not in the public's interest to disclose this information.

Whilst the UHB will not disclose individual contractor data, in fulfilling our Section 16 obligation, the duty to provide advice and assistance, I would like to make you aware of UHB data for each enhanced service that exists within the public domain. I have provided the following link for your convenience.

<http://www.primarycareservices.wales.nhs.uk/enhanced-advanced-services-claims-necaf>

However, please also be aware that the UHB does not hold information relating to private services.