

Ref: FOI/2024/10342

Date Received: 28th November 2024

Response Due: 30th December 2024

Date: 30th December 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

With reference to your request for information received on 28th November 2024, I can confirm in accordance with Section 1 (1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 that we do hold the information you have requested. A response to each part of your request is provided below.

In your request you asked:

Please can I be provided with the below data regarding pathology services under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000?

1. Does the trust/UHB outsource wet surgical specimens?

Yes.

2. If so, how many specimens are outsourced per annum?

2,592.

3. What is the subspecialty of the outsourced specimens? E.g. Skin, Endoscopy etc. Please breakdown if possible.

Dermatology.

4. How much does the trust/UHB spend per annum on outsourced wet specimen processing? Please breakdown for the fiscal years 21/22, 22/23, 23/24.

The Trust has only sent these in 2023/24 therefore this information is being withheld under Section 43 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please see below.

5. Does the trust report in house on wet processed specimens or is this done externally?

Externally.

6. Which organisation(s) does the trust outsource the wet specimen processing to?

Source Bio Science.

- 7. Does the trust/UHB outsource blocks for processing?**
No.
- 8. How much does the trust spend per annum on outsourced block specimen processing? Please breakdown for the fiscal years 21/22, 22/23, 23/24.**
N/A.
- 9. Is there a backlog of unreported specimens with the trust/UHB? If so, for how many patients total?**
None.
- 10. What are the current turnaround times (TAT) for the processing of wet specimens within the trust/UHB?**
4 days.
- 11. Does the trust outsource for tissue staining?**
No.
- 12. How much does the trust/UHB spend on outsourced staining per annum? Please breakdown for the fiscal years 21/22, 22/23, 23/24.**
N/A.
- 13. What is the current TA for wet reporting externally?**
99% in 10 days.
- 14. Does the trust/UHB have a minimum contracted volume with outsourcers?**
No.
- 15. What is the min, mean, and max cost for wet work alone?**
The external company has a price list dependant on the complexity of the case. Therefore, we cannot tell you the price per case.
- 16. What is the cost for professional external reporting?**
The external company has a price list dependant on the complexity of the case. Therefore, we cannot tell you the price per case.
- 17. How many cases are reported by the trust annually?**
83,641.
- 18. What percentage is outsourced for professional work?**
1.2%.
- 19. What percentage is outsourced for technical work?**
3%.
- 20. How many pathologists does the trust/UHB employ?**
30.
- 21. How many cases on average does a single pathologist report annually?**
We work on RCPATH points. They do 250 points per PA.
- 22. Does the trust/UHB have a digital slide scanner?**
Yes.

23. If so, who is the manufacturer of the scanner? e.g. Phillips, Leica etc.
Hamamatsu.

Please note: these questions have been answered with assistance from Northern Care Alliance (NCA) as WWL activity is carried out at NCA.

Section 43(2) – Commercial interests

Information regarding spend per annum on outsourced wet specimen processing has been withheld under section 43(2) of the FOIA if its disclosure would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of the Trust.

Section 43 of the FOIA is a qualified exemption and is subject to the Prejudice Test and the Public Interest Test.

Prejudice test

We confirm that we have carried out a full prejudice test and that, on the balance of probability, the Trust's interests would be prejudiced in the event of disclosure. Therefore, we confirm that the Prejudice Test is engaged.

Public interest test

We have also carried out the Public Interest Test to ascertain whether the public interest in disclosure outweighs the public interest in withholding the requested information:

Public interest in disclosure of the information:

- We acknowledge that there is public interest in transparency around how the Trust engages with suppliers and procurement.
- We acknowledge that there is public interest in the Trust's finances.

Public interest in withholding of the information:

- **Protecting public finances** – As a public authority, the Trust must ensure that it obtains the best value for money. Disclosure of the information would be likely to affect the quality of future offers provided to the Trust. It is therefore firmly in the public interest not to disclose any information which would affect commercial offers made to the Trust, which in turn will affect the Trust's finances.
- **Ensuring fair competition** – Information provided to the Trust during the procurement process contains sensitive competition information. It is not in the public interest to disclose information which would affect free and fair competition.
- **Transparency** – We understand that there is public interest in how the Trust engages with suppliers. However, we consider that the information held by the Trust would not significantly further the public understanding of its relationship with these suppliers beyond what has already been disclosed in this response.
- **Reputation damage or loss of confidence** - It is firmly in the public interest that the Trust takes all steps to protect its reputation around information handling. It is not in the public interest to do anything which would jeopardise our ability to maintain strong working relationships with third parties.

If you are not entirely satisfied with this response, please do not hesitate to contact the Information Governance Department via the email address provided. If we do not hear from you within 40 days, we will assume that we have been able to accommodate your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Stenton', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Stenton
Interim Director of Operations & Performance

PLEASE NOTE:

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you should write to: Information Governance Department, Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust, Suite 9, Buckingham Row, Brick Kiln Lane, Wigan, WN1 1XX.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Helpline number: 0303 123 111