



Ref: FOIA Reference 2024/25-649

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Email [foi@uhnm.nhs.uk](mailto:foi@uhnm.nhs.uk)

Dear Sir/madam

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your email dated 19th December 2024 requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) regarding Winter ear health

**Q1 I would be very grateful if you could answer the following questions in relation to the impacts of different seasons on ear health:**

**How many patients visited A&E for ear-related conditions for e.g., ear infections, burst eardrums, hearing loss during each month of the past five years (2020-2024)?**

A1 To answer this question, the Trust has used the following as “ear related conditions” as supplied by you:

- Infection ear middle – H669
- Infection external ear: H60
- Infection inner ear: H83
- Perforated ear drum – H72
- Hearing loss – H91

The clinical codes have been supplied by the clinical coding team.

The table below shows the total number of Emergency Department (ED) attendances where the above clinical coding has been applied to the ED record.

Data is for the period 01/01/2020 – 23/12/2024:

	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year	
Month	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Grand Total
January	37	25	39	49	56	206
February	38	28	49	48	44	207
March	24	47	31	52	53	207
April	6	35	40	53	44	178
May	25	51	43	39	69	227
June	37	72	55	31	43	238

	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year	
July	42	54	71	47	33	247
August	52	56	41	36	27	212
September	40	45	29	44	44	202
October	39	47	51	43	38	218
November	29	39	38	51	39	196
December	29	47	62	30	37	205
Grand Total	398	546	549	523	527	2543

**Q2 How many patients were admitted into hospital for ear-related conditions for e.g., ear infections, burst eardrums, hearing loss during each month of the past five years (2020-2024)?**

A2 We do not record the reason for the admission on our current clinical information system. Therefore, this information is not held in the Trust’s data warehouse.

Please note, we only apply diagnosis coding to the patient’s discharge record. The below information is based on diagnoses made during the patient’s inpatient stay. This does not mean the patient was admitted for these conditions. Also hearing loss can be classed as a co-morbidity therefore will be coded on the patient’s record whether they were admitted for it or not. The figures below are inflated and again not a true representation.

To truly ascertain the reason for the admission we will have to manually review the 18,608 patient records. Hence, we have applied Section 12 exemption as detailed in answer 4. However, under Section 16 of the FOI Act: *help and advice*, we have provided the below information.

To help with transparency, we have used the following as “ear related conditions” as supplied by you.

- Infection ear middle – H669
- Infection external ear: H60
- Infection inner ear: H83
- Perforated ear drum – H72
- Hearing loss – H91

Please note the clinical codes were supplied by the clinical coding team

Data is for the period 01/01/2020 – 30/11/2024 as we have not coded December’s activity yet.

	Years	Year	Year	Year	Year	
Month	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Grand Total
Jan	243	211	275	378	417	1524
Feb	255	270	251	374	375	1525
Mar	229	270	316	352	412	1579
Apr	130	295	311	337	445	1518
May	180	273	345	378	291	1467
Jun	179	266	356	394	458	1653

	Years	Year	Year	Year	Year	
Jul	232	272	340	394	310	1548
Aug	203	248	341	377	385	1554
Sep	255	267	383	401	385	1691
Oct	250	286	328	416	388	1668
Nov	256	267	370	366	329	1588
Dec	292	278	359	364	Not coded yet	1293
Grand Total	2704	3203	3975	4531	4195	18608

**Q3 How many patients have been treated for recurrent ear-related conditions, initially diagnosed during winter (mid-December - mid March), over the past five years (2020-2024)?**

A3 Out of the 794 unique patients who attended during the months December to March (year) 50 patients returned to the ED department with another ear related condition over the past 5 years

**Q4 Have there been increases in the prescription of antibiotics or other treatments for ear-related conditions during winter (mid-December - mid March), over the past five years (2020-2024)?**

A4 I can neither confirm nor deny whether the information you have requested is held by the Trust in its entirety. This is because the information requested in this question is not held centrally but may be recorded in health records (*potentially every patient's record who visited the Trust would need to be checked to see if they have had a prescription*). In order to confirm whether this information is held we would therefore have to individually access all health records within the Trust and extract the information where it is present. We therefore estimate that complying with your request is exempt under section 12 of the FOI Act: *cost of compliance is excessive*. The section 12 exemption applies when it is estimated a request will take in excess of 18 hours to complete. We estimate that accessing and reviewing all health records and then extracting relevant information would take longer than the 18 hours allowed for. In addition to the section 12 exemption the Trust is also applying section 14 (1) exemption: *oppressive burden on the authority*.

\*Please note that any individuals identified do not give consent for their personal data to be processed for the purposes of direct marketing.

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An anonymised copy of this request can be found on the Trust's disclosure log, please note that all requests can be found at the following link: <http://www.uhnm.nhs.uk/aboutus/Statutory-Policies-and-Procedures/Pages/Freedom-of-Information-Disclosure-Log.aspx>

This letter confirms the completion of this request. A log of this request and a copy of this letter will be held by the Trust.

If you have any queries related to the response provided please in the first instance contact my office.

Should you have a complaint about the response or the handling of your request, please also contact my office to request a review of this. If having exhausted the Trust's FOIA complaints process you are still not satisfied, you are entitled to approach the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and request an assessment of the manner in which the Trust has managed your request.

The Information Commissioner may be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF or via [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

Yours,



**Leah Carlisle**  
Head of Data, Security & Protection and Health Records  
Data Protection Officer

Appendix

On 30<sup>th</sup> December 2024 we contacted you via email with the following.

To continue with your request we require clarification the following.

Q3. How many patients have been treated for recurrent ear-related conditions, initially diagnosed during winter (mid-December - mid March), over the past five years (2020-2024)?

We need you to clarify what you mean/classing as “recurrent”. As we have patients who have attended ED multiple times during the same week for the same initial diagnosis, would this be classed as recurrent?

Or is there a specific time frame/period we need to be looking at from the initial to the next time they may come into ED?

What if a patient is initially seen in 2020 and then attended again 2023, is this classed as recurrent?

Would attending ED twice for an ear-related condition, even if it’s for a different ear-related condition, be classed as recurrent?

As you can see the word “recurrent” is very vague and there are many different factors we need to consider to be able to answer this question.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2025 you replied via email with.

*‘We would like to understand how many patients revisited either A&E or were re-admitted into hospital for the same initial diagnosis (relating to ear health), over the time period specified. For example, any patient that came in once and had to then come in at least once more, over the five year period’.*