



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol  
Bae Abertawe  
Swansea Bay University  
Health Board

Cadeirydd/Chair: **Emma Woollett**  
Prif Weithredwr/Chief Executive: **Tracy Myhill**

**gofalu am ein gilydd, cydweithio, gwella bob amser**  
**caring for each other, working together, always improving**

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg ac yn y Saesneg. We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Dyddiad/Date: 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020  
Ein Cyf / Our Ref: 20-K-036

☎ 01639 648363

✉ FOIA.Requests@wales.nhs.uk

[REDACTED]

Corporate Services  
Headquarters  
1 Talbot Gateway  
Baglan  
Port Talbot, SA12 7BR

Dear [REDACTED],

I refer to your Freedom of Information Act Request acknowledged by ourselves on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020. Your request sought information relating to waiting lists.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused huge disruption to NHS services, not just in Swansea Bay but across the UK. As with all health organisations, we had to suspend non-emergency services and appointments so our hospitals did not become overwhelmed while we cared for those seriously ill with the virus.

Inevitably this has affected waiting times as it has done with all other health boards.

Clearly this is not something any of us would have wanted and we are extremely conscious of the potential consequences for patients. Since the start of the pandemic we have continued to care for those requiring urgent treatment. Our hard-working staff have also come up with innovative solutions to protect services, adapt services to continue recognising the existence of the virus and introduce new ones specifically as a result of the virus – there are numerous examples on our website.

As it has become safe and appropriate to do so we have reintroduced many services, often with changes in place to protect patients and staff.

**1. How many patients are currently waiting for ENT appointments within the Health Board?**

As at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020, 4295 patients were waiting for an Outpatients appointment.

**2. How many of these have been delayed due to Covid19?**

The Minister for Health and Social Services announced on 13th March 2020 a



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Swansea Bay University Health Board is the operational name of Swansea Bay University Local Health Board

number of key COVID-19 related actions NHS Wales should take. These actions included guidance to suspend a range of activity to enable dedicated capacity for COVID-19 to be built up and to protect vulnerable patients.

As a result of the Minister's announcement, non-urgent outpatient appointments were suspended with a number of exceptions mainly in the areas of paediatrics, neonatology, ophthalmology, thyroid, oncology and renal services. Urgent outpatient activity has continued albeit adapted and delivered through different modalities using digital technology. Non-urgent surgical admissions and procedures were also suspended. Emergency surgery continued to be prioritised daily.

During this time, a number of different approaches were taken to minimise the impact of COVID-19 by use of digital solutions that have enabled virtual outpatient appointments and patient reviews to be undertaken remotely. It is also important to note that some patients have chosen not to proceed with appointment or surgery during the pandemic period.

We worked within guidance provided by Welsh Government on the delivery of essential services.

Since this point, where possible, we have been gradually bringing services back on line, in line with relevant infection, physical distancing and service specific guidelines. This has been done on a clinical urgency basis, prioritising those most in need. This prioritisation has been led by clinical multi-disciplinary teams.

It is not possible to accurately provide information on the total number of postponed or cancelled appointments at this time as during the height of the pandemic, the majority of elective and non-urgent appointments were not "booked in", or "planned" due to suspension of services as noted above. As these appointments were never entered on our booking systems in the first place, we cannot provide an accurate figure of appointments postponed in this period.

Patients are being treated based on clinical priority and capacity will increase when circumstance allows.

We are working hard at restarting services where we can, and finding innovative ways of providing them where possible. You can find more information and updates on our website;

<https://sbuhb.nhs.wales/coronavirus-covid-19/information/re-starting-services>

I hope this information is helpful. If you require anything further please contact us at [FOIA.Requests@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:FOIA.Requests@wales.nhs.uk).

Under the terms of the Health Board's Freedom of Information policy, individuals seeking access to recorded information held by the Health Board are entitled to request internal review of the handling of their requests. If you would like to complain about the Health Board's handling of your request please contact me directly at the address below or register your complaint via [FOIA.Requests@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:FOIA.Requests@wales.nhs.uk).

If after Internal Review you remain dissatisfied you are also entitled to refer the matter to the information commissioner at the Information Commissioner's Office



(Wales), 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Churchill House, Churchill Way, Cardiff, CF10 2HH. Telephone Number: 029 2067 8400.

Yours sincerely



Pam Wenger  
**Director of Corporate Governance**

