



17 May 2016

Dear ,

Request for Information – ATISN 10372 – Forms for Applying to Low Income Scheme

I am responding to your request of 20 April under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). You asked for:

1. The name and email address of the senior responsible person for the supply of these essential forms Prolog - and therefore the public.
2. The background file information and correspondence on why these essential forms were not available to the public from March 16, 2016 onwards.
3. (i) The reasoning in the decision made by the WG of why these forms are not readily available online, and
(ii) that they are processed by an external company - not situated in Wales - but at an added cost to the Welsh taxpayer.
4. The costs of processing these forms (and any other externally sent NHS free prescription forms) for the financial year 2015/16 by Prolog or any other external company/ companies.

The Welsh Government holds some information in relation to your request, as follows:-

1. Karen Eveleigh, email:- pharmacyandprescribingbranch@wales.gsi.gov.uk
2. This information is attached at annex 1. Some of the information contained therein, such as the names and addresses of members of the public have been redacted as are exempt under s40(2) "personal data" of the FoIA, as persons affected had no expectation that when corresponding with the Welsh Government on this matter their name and address would be placed into the public arena. We believe that it would breach the first Data Protection Principle if these details were made public without the explicit consent of the individual, and as such disclosure of the details in response to this

request would breach the Data Protection Act. The supply of forms to enable Welsh citizens to apply for financial support towards the costs of travel to hospital, dental and optical charges is demand-led. In March 2016, Prolog experienced a higher than anticipated level of demand. . The preparation time required to arrange a new print run of the forms resulted in a lack of availability from March until 11 April. . This was an unfortunate and unprecedented occurrence. The risk of this occurring in the future is being mitigated by the establishment of a “buffer stock” supply at Prolog.

3. (i) We hold no information with respect to this part of your request. Welsh Government has not made a decision to make the Low Income Scheme (LIS) application forms unavailable on line. There is however, a complex system operating across most of the UK and the process of modernisation will be challenging. We are currently collaborating on a modernisation project with the NHS Business Services Authority, which administers the NHS Low Income Scheme for Wales, England and Scotland. The Authority is leading on a project to develop an electronic application and assessment process. The pilot/testing stage of the project will begin in 2017.

(ii) Prior to devolution the LIS contract was managed by the Department of Health. No pre devolution information is held by the Welsh Government. The current contract for supplying the LIS forms was awarded to Prolog under the Welsh Government framework contract, following a full and open competitive tendering exercise. In carrying out procurement activity the public sector in Wales are required to adopt the principles of Welsh Public Procurement Policy, details of which are available on the Welsh Government website:-

<http://gov.wales/topics/improvingservices/better/vfm/publications/procurement-policy-statement/?lang=en>

4. The costs of processing forms by Prolog in 2015/16 was £97,010. In addition, the Welsh Government funds a British Telecom phone line for Welsh citizens at a cost of £4,000 per year.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act we are responding within 20 working days of receiving your email dated 20 April clarifying your request for information,

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government’s handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government’s Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or Email: FreedomOfInformationOfficer@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely,