



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

ATISN 15542

December 2021

Dear

Complaint in respect of ATISN 15542

I am responding to your email which was received on 3 November, complaining about our response to your request for information under the Freedom of Information ("FOI") Act 2000. This letter is to inform you of the outcome.

In your email of 3 November you indicated that we had not responded to some of the questions you raised.

I have reviewed our response to your FOI request in accordance with the procedure stated in my previous letter to you (dated 10 November). As we stated in that earlier response the provisions enshrined within the Freedom of Information Act 2000 provide a right of access to recorded information that we hold at the time the request is made. However, the Act does not require us to share our opinion on matters, provide explanations, etc. where this is not already held as recorded information.

You can ask for any information you think we may hold. The right only covers recorded information which includes information held on computers, in emails and in printed or handwritten documents as well as images, video and audio recordings. You should identify the information you want as clearly as possible. Your request can be in the form of a question, rather than a request for specific documents, but we do not have to answer your question if this would mean creating new information or giving an opinion or judgment that is not already recorded.

As such, I believe that our response was correct. However, upon review, I recognise that our response could have made it clearer what questions we believe are valid FOI request and those which are just asking questions and fall outside the remit of the FOI Act.

Our responses to those questions that fall outside the FOI Act are not subject to an internal review under that Act.

In your email of 3 November you do not appear to be suggesting that we have not complied with our obligations under the FOI Act where we have provided the recorded information we hold. Rather you have complained that the answers we provided were not "robust and scientifically accurate". The FOI Internal Review procedures do not concern whether you agree with the content of what was released.

In our response letter (dated 27 October), we wrote to you answering as many of your non FOI questions as we reasonably could. We did this as a gesture of goodwill, and in the interests of openness and transparency. In my view, none of the questions you posed were requests for information that we hold. The questions were either asking us to give an opinion or judgment, and/or would have meant creating new information.

Whilst this does not form part of the FOI Internal Review, in reflection, I recognise that our response to the first question posed within the scope of your request could have been improved upon. Consequently, please see an amended response towards this aspect of your request –

- 1. Why has no-one in the NHS or the Government promoted the use of safe Nutraceuticals like D3, Zinc, Selenium, and Vitamin C, as safe prophylactics, that help can boost immunity within the general public as a first line defence against the alleged virus?*

Through Health and Care Research Wales, Wales is involved in the UK wide research endeavour to investigate potential treatments in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Vitamin C high dose was introduced into [REMAP-CAP: a platform trial for severely ill patients with COVID-19](#) as a treatment arm. There is also a UK wide therapeutics taskforce which is actively considering new treatments (more info at <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/the-covid-19-therapeutics-taskforce>) and is open to considering new treatments to test and you would need to contact them directly (therapeuticstaskforce@dhsc.gov.uk).

Welsh Government is aware that the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) have looked at the use of Nutraceuticals specifically with regard to COVID-19 and there are several nutrients that are involved with the normal functioning of the immune system. Most people can get all the vitamins and minerals they need by eating a healthy, balanced diet and do not need to take supplements. The government therefore continues to advise that during this time everyone follows a healthy, balanced diet, as illustrated by the Eatwell Guide.

The Association of UK Dieticians also offers helpful advice about nutrition and dietary issues related to the COVID-19 / Coronavirus pandemic –

https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/covid-19-corona-virus-advice-for-the-general-public.html?fbclid=IwAR0xtSMY_owpZ_vVP9A23RvgyRxBdDnVTvy6-bfzZm_DkHQtQnif77ITq6g

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) have considered emerging evidence on nutrition and COVID-19 throughout 2020 and 2021. In June 2020, SACN conducted a scoping exercise that indicates a lack of robust evidence at this current time to suggest that specific nutrients or nutritional supplements can reduce the risk or severity of COVID-19. This has remained unchanged based on evidence thus far. SACN continues its [monitoring of the evidence on Nutrition and COVID-19](#).

As you have not raised any complaints that we have not provided the recorded information you asked for, I do not uphold your complaint in this instance.

If you remain dissatisfied with this response you also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner at:

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

Tel: 01625 545 745

Fax: 01625 524 510

Email: casework@ico.gsi.gov.uk

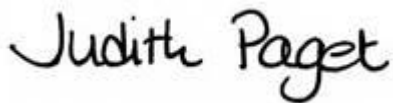
Also, if you think that there has been maladministration in dealing with your request, you have the option to make a complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales who can be contacted at:

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae
Pencoed
Bridgend
CF35 5LJ

Telephone: 0845 6010987 (local rate)

Email: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith Paget". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Judith Paget

Director General of Health/NHS Chief Executive, Health & Social Services