

Reference:	FOI.14496.24
Subject:	Childbirth injuries
Date of Request:	24 May 2024

Requested:

Over the past five financial years, could you tell me;

1. How many complaints have been made to your health board involving birth-related injuries to mothers? Could you please provide a breakdown of the figures by year.
2. The number of births, each year, resulting in one or more of the following;-
 - a. Third degree tearing (obstetric anal sphincter injury)
 - b. Fourth degree tearing (obstetric anal sphincter injury)
 - c. Other birth-related event resulting in emergency surgery (other than caesarean) – please provide as much context as possible.
 Please specify the number of births followed by the type of injury/intervention/ result. E.g.

2022 No. of births	Third degree tear	Fourth degree tear	Other birth event resulting in emergency surgery

3. The number of complaints referencing ‘birth trauma’, depression or PTSD as a direct result of a childbirth injury.

Clarified

With that question we were hoping to mop up any areas that would still be relevant but may have been missed from the questions relating to tears. Perhaps it’s led to haemorrhaging or internal damage that needs repair, for example.

Response:

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with all of the information requested, as it is estimated that the cost of answering your request would exceed the “appropriate limit” as stated in the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. The “appropriate limit” represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours (or 2½ working days) in determining whether the UHB holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

As the information requested for question 2 is not collated and recorded centrally, the UHB would need to undertake a manual trawl of all Maternity patient records for the 2019/20 to 2023/24 financial years, to identify any information that may fulfil these parts of your request.

The UHB is therefore applying an exemption under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA), which provides an exemption from a public authority’s obligation to comply with a request for information where the cost of compliance is estimated to exceed the appropriate limit.

However, under section 16 of the FoIA, the UHB has a duty to provide advice and assistance. Therefore, the UHB provides the accessible information it holds below.

For questions 1 and 3, the UHB is unable to provide you with the information broken down by financial year as requested, due to the low number of cases (5 and under), as there is a potential risk of identifying individuals if this was disclosed. The UHB is therefore withholding this detail under Section 40(2) of the FoIA. This information is protected by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)/UK General Data Protection Regulations, as its disclosure would constitute unfair and unlawful processing and would be contrary to the principles and articles of the UK GDPR. This exemption is absolute and therefore, there is no requirement to apply the public interest test.

In reaching this decision, the DPA and UK GDPR define personal data as data that relates to a living individual who can be identified solely from that data or from that data and other information, which is in the possession of the data controller.

1. A Section 40 exemption has been applied. However, the UHB confirms that a total of nine (9) birth-related injury complaints have been received, as recorded on the UHB's DATIX Incident Reporting system, covering the 2019/20 to 2023/24 financial years.
2. A section 12 exemption has been applied. However, the UHB can provide, within the table below, the total number of births and the combined number of third and fourth degree tears, during the 2019 to 2023 calendar years.

Please note:- the information is only accessible in calendar year and under the FoIA, the UHB cannot create new information to fulfil a request.

Calendar year	Number of births	Number of tears
2019	3,057	13
2020	2,984	26
2021	2,956	28
2022	2,884	30
2023	2,957	32

3. A Section 40 exemption has been applied. However, the UHB confirms that a total of twenty-seven (27) complaints have been received that have a suggestion/allegation of birth trauma, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) within the complaint, as recorded on the UHB'S DATIX Incident Reporting system, covering the 2019/20 to 2023/24 financial years.

Please note:- the UHB cannot confirm if there was a clinical diagnosis of trauma or PTSD, without a manual trawl of patient records.