

Reference:	FOI.17134.25
Subject:	Perineal tears and obstetric practice
Date of Request:	19 April 2025

Requested:

Please could you provide the following information that is attached in the word document for the individual free-standing maternity units, alongside maternity units and obstetrician led labour wards:

- Glangwili Hospital
- Gwennlian Maternity Unit, Bronglais Hospital
- Withybush General Hospital

Response:

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with all 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.

The Maternity department’s online maternity dashboard does not categorise individuals into Primiparous or Multiparous. We would therefore need to undertake a trawl of all maternity records to disaggregate the data, and to identify information which may fulfil your request.

The UHB would also need to undertake a manual trawl of records to identify anyone who was recorded as having a tear during delivery, this includes a second-degree tear, sutured second degree tear, third- and fourth-degree tears, because the UHB does not record vaginal tears by individual categories. Where data is provided it is inclusive of all third- and fourth-degree tears.

Furthermore, the UHB does not record a breakdown of assisted births by forceps or ventouse deliveries as requested. To identify which deliveries utilised forceps or ventouse, a manual trawl of all maternity records would need to be undertaken. Therefore, the UHB provides information collectively on the total number of assisted births recorded.

The UHB can confirm that there was a total of one thousand four hundred and seventy-nine (1,479) vaginal births recorded on the Welsh Patient Administration System (WPAS) between the 31 December 2023 and 1 January 2025. Therefore, conducting the search to provide you with the exact information being would far exceed the ‘appropriate limit’, costing the UHB the following:

1,479 @ 15 minutes per item = 369.75 hours
369.75 @ £25 per hour = £9,243.75

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 within Attachment 1, which includes collective information on assisted deliveries and vaginal tears.

Where the figures in Attachment 1 have been replaced with an asterisk (*), the UHB is unable to provide you with the exact number, due to the low number of cases (5 and less), 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 defines 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.