

Reference:	FOI.20927.26
Subject:	Surgical Instrument Cleaning
Date of Request:	2 July 2026

Requested:

1. Number of surgical procedures cancelled or postponed since Jan 1st 2022 due to problems with surgical instruments, including: inadequate sterilisation, missing instruments, or contamination concerns.
2. Number of internal incident reports or safety concerns raised since Jan 1st 2022 from health practitioners referring to issues with surgical equipment or instruments.

Please break down the information by calendar year and hospitals in your trust.

Response:

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with some of the information requested as there is a potential risk of identifying individuals if this was disclosed. The UHB is therefore withholding the following details under Section 40(2) of the FoIA:

- The information requested broken down by hospital due to the low number of cases (8 or less).
- Additionally, where there is an asterisk (*) the UHB is unable to provide you with the exact number of patients, due to low numbers (8 or less).

This information is protected by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)/UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR), 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.

However, whilst operating in accordance with the Section 45 Freedom of Information Code of Practice, the UHB has a duty to provide advice and assistance and provides the information it holds below.

1. The UHB does not hold the information exactly as requested as the information is not recorded in this format on the Welsh Patient Administration System (WPAS). Therefore, the UHB provides within the table below, the number of surgical procedures cancelled or postponed due to equipment failure/unavailability, during the 2022 to 2025 calendar years, and from 1 January to 3 July 2026.

Year	Number
2022	10
2023	13
2024	9
2025	11
1 January - 3 July 2026	11

Please note: equipment failure/unavailability may not include problems with surgical instruments.

2. The UHB provides within the table below, the number of incidents reported by members of staff who have experienced issues with surgical instruments, during the 2022 to 2025 calendar years, and from 1 January to 3 July 2026.

Year	Number
2022	12
2023	13
2024	15
2025	12
1 January - 3 July 2026	*