

Freedom of Information Act Request

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I would like to request the following information:

I am conducting research into potential disparities in pain relief experienced by patients of different ethnic backgrounds during childbirth and maternity care. Specifically, I would like to request the following:

Over the past four years (2022, 2023, 2024, 2025):

- a) How many formal complaints or concerns were raised by maternity patients that related specifically to pain relief, including delays, denial, or perceived neglect?
- b) If this information is recorded, please break the number of these complaints down by ethnicity of the complainant.

Response

a) Over the period 2022 to 2025, a total of **12** formal complaints or concerns were raised by maternity patients specifically relating to pain relief, including issues such as delays, denial, or perceived neglect.

b) While ethnicity data may be recorded in individual complaint files, we are unable to provide a breakdown of complaints by ethnicity. This is because doing so would involve disclosing information where the number of individuals within certain ethnic categories is fewer than five. Under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, we are exempt from disclosing information that could potentially identify individuals.

Releasing such small numbers, particularly in the context of a sensitive issue such as maternity care and pain relief, carries a significant risk of individuals being identifiable, especially when considered alongside other publicly available information. This would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

For these reasons, we are applying the exemption under **Section 40(2) – Personal Information**, and cannot provide the requested breakdown by ethnicity.

If you are not satisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to request an internal review. Requests for an internal review should be submitted within 40 working days from the date of this response, and should be addressed to d.wraith@nhs.net.

If you remain dissatisfied after the internal review, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office

Our Ref: 291
May 2025

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 0303 123 1113
Website: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

I would be grateful for any partial or relevant information you can provide. Please could you send the data in the form of an excel spreadsheet. If any part of this request exceeds the cost limit, please inform me as soon as possible so that I can refine the request.