

Ref. No: 2128
Date: 23/10/25
Subject: Deaf Patients and British Sign Language Interpreter Provision
in Maternity Services

REQUEST

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would like to request the following information relating to maternity services delivered by **Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust**:

1. How many pregnant women had communication needs flagged under the NHS Accessible Information Standard (AIS) between **1 Jan 2020** and **31 Aug 2025**?
2. Of these, how many were recorded as requiring **British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation**?
3. Number and percentage of instances where an **in-person BSL interpreter** was provided during:
 - Antenatal/prenatal appointments
 - Intrapartum period (labour and childbirth) - including but not limited to elective caesarean section and emergency caesarean section.
 - Neonatal period - including but not limited to intensive neonatal care.
 - Postnatal/postpartum appointments - up to 12 months after the birth - including but not limited to community midwife and health visitor appointments.

If this breakdown is not available, please provide the total number of occasions when this was the case across all maternity services.
4. Number and percentage of instances where **video remote interpreting (VRI)** was used during:
 - Antenatal/prenatal appointments
 - Intrapartum period (labour and childbirth) - including but not limited to elective caesarean section and emergency caesarean section
 - Neonatal period - including but not limited to intensive neonatal care.

- Postnatal/postpartum appointments - up to 12 months after the birth - including but not limited to community midwife and health visitor appointments.

If this breakdown is not available, please provide the total number of occasions when this was the case across all maternity services.

5. Number and percentage of instances where **no interpreter** was provided despite sign language needs being recorded.

- Antenatal/prenatal appointments - including but not limited to elective caesarean section and emergency caesarean section.
- Intrapartum period (labour and childbirth) - including but not limited to elective caesarean section and emergency caesarean section
- Neonatal period - including but not limited to intensive neonatal care.
- Postnatal/postpartum appointments - up to 12 months after the birth - including but not limited to community midwife and health visitor appointments.

If this breakdown is not available, please provide the total number of occasions when this was the case across all maternity services.

6. The number of:

- a. elective caesarean sections involving deaf, hard of hearing, hearing-impaired, or deafened patients
- b. emergency caesarean sections involving deaf, hard of hearing, hearing-impaired, or deafened patients

If this breakdown is not available, please provide the total number of caesarean sections - elective and emergency - involving deaf, hard of hearing, hearing-impaired, or deafened patients.

7. Number of **Datix incidents, complaints, or serious incident reports** between Jan 2020 – Aug 2025 involving deaf, hard of hearing, hearing impaired or deafened patients.

Please provide responses in open formats (CSV/XLSX/MSG/PDF). If any part of this request is exempt, please disclose the remainder and cite the specific exemption(s) relied upon.

RESPONSE

Following a thorough assessment, we regret to inform you that Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust are unable to comply with your request, as doing so would exceed the cost limit set out under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Section 12 states that a public authority is not obliged to comply with a request for information if it estimates that the cost of doing so would exceed the appropriate limit, which is currently set at £450 for NHS organisations. This equates to 18 hours of staff time, calculated at a standard rate of £25 per hour, as defined in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004.

The Trust has estimated that locating, retrieving, and extracting the relevant information would significantly exceed the 18-hour threshold, even with reasonable efforts to narrow the scope.

We are therefore applying Section 12 of the Act and will not be proceeding with the request in its current form.