



22 November 2024

Our Ref: FOI 310

Dear

**Freedom of Information Act 2000
Information in Relation to Birth Rights**

I am writing to confirm that the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (the Trust) has now completed its search for information relating to above which you requested on 24 October 2024. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your request. Thank you for your understanding and forbearance.

A response to each of the questions raised has been provided by the Surgery & Elective, Maternity & Paediatric Services Directorate and is attached in Appendix A.

If you are unhappy as to how this request has been handled, you have the right to seek a review within the Trust in the first instance. You should write to the Information Governance Department, Lough House, Ards Community Hospital (informationgovernance@setrust.hscni.net) within two months of the date of this response and your complaint will be considered and a response provided, within 20 working days of receipt.

If, after receiving a response, you remain unhappy, you can refer your complaint to the Information Commissioner at The Information Commissioner's Office –Northern Ireland, 3rd Floor, 14 Cromac Place, Belfast, BT7 2JB. It is important to note that if you refer any matter to the Information Commissioner, you will need to show evidence of having gone through the Trust's internal review procedure to try to resolve the matter with the Trust in the first instance.

If you have any queries about this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Manning
Information Governance Officer

Q1. Does your Trust operate a home birth service for women and birthing people (regardless of whether such services are offered through a dedicated team or integrated into wider maternity services)?

A1. Yes, the Trust offer a Homebirth service for all women and birthing people.

Q2. If so, are home birth services available 24 hours a day, seven days a week across the whole geographic area overseen by the Trust?

A2. Yes, the Homebirth services are provided 24 hours a day 7 days a week across the entire geographical area of the Trust, facilitated by the Community Midwifery Teams.

Q3. Has your Trust been able to provide home birth services to women and birthing people 24 hours a day, seven days a week without any suspensions or restrictions to that ability in the last 12 months? Please note in using the terms suspensions or restrictions we include (but are not limited to) restrictions to the days/times when home births can be attended by midwives or not being able to offer a home birth service at all for a period of time. We do not include unforeseen staff shortages on a particular shift here.

A3. In the past 12 months the Trust have provided a Homebirth service 24 hours a day 7 days a week for all those requesting the service. There have not been any suspensions or restrictions to the days/times when Homebirth can be attended by our midwives.

Q4. Please include the terms and reason(s) for any suspensions or restrictions in the last 12 months.

A4. N/A.

Q5. Has your Trust been unable to send midwives to attend a home birth due to unforeseen circumstances (such as staff shortages or sickness) on a particular shift in the last 12 months? Please include how many times this has occurred in the last 12 months.

A5. The Homebirth service was stood down for a two day period in September 2024 due to staff sickness. Women were informed and plans were made for them to Birth in Home from Home if required. Midwives returned early from annual leave to ensure the service was resumed.

- Q6. *How many home births have been attended by midwives in your Trust in the last 12 months, including those resulting in intrapartum and/or postnatal transfer into hospital and those resulting in a baby being born at home with no transfer-in?***
- A6. Twenty five Homebirths have been attended by Community Midwives within the Trust in the past 12 months.