

Freedom of Information request 49-22

Request

1. Could you please provide data on the number of home births within your health board in 2021 – and in 2020, 2019, 2018 and 2017, if possible for comparative purposes?

In addition to the data, it would be very helpful if could you please tell us:

2. what's understood to be behind any increase (or decrease) – ie: active campaigns for home births, Covid prompting fear of hospital/midwifery unit attendance, or what have you
3. how have staff levels affected this if at all
4. how much savings has this generated for the health board if any
5. does the health board have goals to increase the number of home births (Scotland in recent years had the lowest figure across the UK)

Response

1. Please see the table below for the number of home births within NHS Borders from 2017 to 2021.

Year	Number of home births
2017	6
2018	<5
2019	13
2020	10
2021	21

2. NHS Borders does not formally record the reason for the increase in home births, however a small number patients have volunteered this information and the reasons given include: during Covid-19 due to demand from patients; previous birth experience was not satisfactory; visiting restrictions in hospital caused by Covid-19; fear of contracting Covid-19 while in hospital; fear of delivering on-route to the hospital due to travelling distance; the cost of travelling to the hospital. For some women there has also been the issue of finding child care, particularly when everyone was still in lockdown and families and friends were not always available at short notice.
3. Staffing levels have not affected the home birth rate.
4. There has been no financial savings identified with the increase in home births.
5. There are not any particular goals to increase the number of home births but NHS Borders do hope to facilitate access to better information to allow women and their partners to make their own decision about where they would like to birth their baby.

Please note that as NHS Borders is such a small Board and the number of home births is very small, to provide further details could allow individuals to be identified and we would be in breach of the Data Protection Act 2018. We are therefore withholding all other data under Section 38(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. This is in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics that any number that is less than five, actual numbers and potentially identifiable information is withheld to help maintain patient confidentiality due to potential risk of disclosure. Further information is available in the ISD Statistical Disclosure Control Protocol.

If you are not satisfied with the way your request has been handled or the decision given, you may ask NHS Borders to review its actions and the decision. If you would like to request a review please apply in writing to, Freedom of Information Review, NHS Borders, Room 2EC3, Education Centre, Borders General Hospital, Melrose, TD6 9BS or foi.enquiries@borders.scot.nhs.uk.

The request for a review should include your name and address for correspondence, the request for information to which the request relates and the issue which you wish to be reviewed. Please state the reference number **49-22** on this request. Your request should be made within 40 working days from receipt of this letter.

If following this review, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you may appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner and request an investigation of your complaint. Your request to the Scottish Information Commissioner should be in writing (or other permanent form), stating your name and an address for correspondence. You should provide the details of the request and your reasons for dissatisfaction with both the original response by NHS Borders and your reasons for dissatisfaction with the outcome of the internal review. Your application for an investigation by the Scottish Information Commissioner must be made within six months of your receipt of the response with which you are dissatisfied. The address for the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner is, Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife.