



Department of Health

09/03/2015

DE00000924545

Dear Ms Cope,

Thank you for your request of 3 March 2015 under the Freedom of Information Act (2000). Your exact request was:

"I would like to know:

- 1. The number of abortions in England Scotland and Wales in 2014 on persons aged 16 and under.*
- 2. Any and all injuries or ill-health that arose in an abortion case on persons aged 16 and under.*
- 3. How many abortions were not first-time cases for persons aged 16 and under i.e. in the case of persons having abortions for the second, third time etc.*
- 4. The spending 2014 on abortion prodecures funded by the NHS for persons aged 16 and under.*

Could you classify these figures under age and country."

I can confirm that the Department holds information relevant to you request.

However, it is being withheld under Section 22, which states that public bodies are not obliged to disclose information that is intended for future publication. Abortion statistics are published annually and those for 2014 are not due for publication until May/June this year.

Section 22 is a qualified exemption, and we are required to assess as objectively as possible whether the balance of public interest favours disclosing or withholding the information.

In general, there is a strong public interest in information being made as freely available as possible. However, we also recognise a strong public interest in allowing sufficient time for the Department to properly consider and analyse information before it is placed in the public domain. To release unverified statistics that subsequently turn out to be inaccurate would give the public a misleading and harmful impression of the Department, and thus undermine the work of the Department in compiling and publishing Abortion statistics

across England and Wales on an annual basis. For this reason, we have concluded that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs that in its release.

Further to the above, release of abortion statistics ahead of publication is prohibited under the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008.

However, data is currently available for 2013 which does contain some of the information you require. This can be found on the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales>

If you have any queries about this email, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to:

Head of the Freedom of Information Team
Department of Health
Room 520
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS

Email: freedomofinformation@dh.gsi.gov.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner (ICO) for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Department. The ICO can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Graham Sale

Freedom of Information Officer
Department of Health

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