

Date 14/04/2025  
Your Ref  
Our Ref 9877

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Dear

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – NURSE ABSENCE**

I write in response to your request for information in relation to nurse absence.

**Question:**

- o Please include the following information for the following financial years: 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25:
  - Total number of days lost due to sick leave taken by NHS Nurses
  - The total number of NHS nurses who took sick leave
  - Total number of days lost to Mental Health issues taken by NHS nurses
  - The total number of nurses who required sickness absence on mental health grounds

**Answer:**

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/YTD
Total number of working days Lost	84,304.5	90,311.0	89,832.0	93,082.5
Total number of staff absent <sup>1</sup>	6,273	6,701	6,950	7,357
Total number of working days lost due to Anxiety/Stress/Depression/Other Psychiatric Illnesses	22,126.0	23,722.0	22,038.5	23,733.5
Total number of staff absent absent due to Anxiety/Stress/Depression/Other Psychiatric Illnesses	1,102	1,047	1,087	1,147

**Notes:**

Sickness Absence includes registered nursing only.

FY 2024/YTD includes sickness absence between 1st April 2024 to 19th March 2025.

Please note that we do not have 'mental ill health ' as an sickness absence reason. Instead the below includes sickness absence reason 'Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illnesses' .

We are not able to differentiate between work and non-work related absences.

Headquarters  
Mainpoint  
102 West Port  
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Chair Professor John Connaghan CBE  
Chief Executive Professor Caroline Hiscox  
*Lothian NHS Board is the common name of Lothian Health Board*



<sup>1</sup>The headcount data counts each individual once per financial year. In both the "total number of staff absent" and "total number absent due to 'Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illnesses' individuals are only counted once, even if they had multiple absences. These figures cannot be compared directly, as someone absent for mental health related issues may also have been absent for other reasons, making the comparison misleading

Question:

- The number of NHS nurses taking more than seven days of absence without a sick note
- The total number of days lost in excess of the seven days.
- For example, if an individual has taken off 10 days without a sick note, then this would be 3 days in excess of the seven days

Answer

We do not hold any data centrally for the number of NHS nurses who have taken more than seven days of absence without a sick note.

Under the Freedom of Information Act NHS Lothian is not required to create new records to enable it to respond to your enquiry. This information is not collated or held in aggregate form and it would be necessary to review all case files relating to staff absence over the period you have requested to assemble the information you seek. Even if NHS Lothian did this – and there would be significant cost implications in doing so – it would be unable to respond in full to your request. The information requested is therefore exempt under section 12.1 – Cost.

As the rules around sick notes are clear for all staff, any member of staff taking an absence in excess of 7 days without a sick line would be classed as being on unauthorised absence and would receive no pay.

I hope the information provided helps with your request.

If you are unhappy with our response to your request, you do have the right to request us to review it. Your request should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If our decision is unchanged following a review and you remain dissatisfied with this, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner within 6 months of receipt of our review response. You can do this by using the Scottish Information Commissioner's Office online appeals service at [www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal). If you remain dissatisfied with the Commissioner's response you then have the option to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law.

If you require a review of our decision to be carried out, please write to the FOI Reviewer at the email address at the head of this letter. The review will be undertaken by a Reviewer who was not involved in the original decision-making process.



FOI responses (subject to redaction of personal information) may appear on NHS Lothian's Freedom of Information website at: <https://org.nhsllothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

**ALISON MACDONALD**  
**Executive Director, Nursing**  
Cc: Chief Executive