Lothian NHS Board

Lothian NHS Board
Mainpoint
102 Westport
Edinburgh
EH3 9DN
Main Switchboard: 0131 242 1000

www.nhslothian.scot

Date   07/01/2026
Your Ref
Our Ref   10908

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
Extension   35687
Direct Line   0131 465 5687
loth.freedomofinformation@nhs.scot
richard.mutch@nhs.scot

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – PRONOUNS

I write in response to your request for information in relation to pronouns and correspondence.

Question:
1. Staff use of pronouns
    a. How many staff currently include pronouns in their official work email signatures?
    b. If exact numbers aren't held, please provide any monitoring, estimates, or internal data you have.

Answer:

a.	*NHS Lothian does not collect this information.*
b.	*We do not monitor, estimate, or collect this information.*
	As per Section 17 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 formally I must advise that we do not hold this information.

Question:
2. Organisational position
    a. Is the inclusion of pronouns in email signatures mandated, encouraged, or left entirely optional within your organisation?
    b. Please provide any policies, internal guidance, or communications that set out your approach.

Answer:

a.	*The inclusion of pronouns in email signatures is entirely optional. It is not mandated or formally encouraged.*
b.	*Rules around the use of NHS Lothian email are set out in the NHS Lothian Email: Acceptable Use policy- please see the link Email Acceptable Use.pdf (Email Acceptable Use.pdf) - Enclosed*

Question:
3. References to external resources

Headquarters
Mainpoint
102 West Port
Edinburgh EH3 9DN

Chair Professor John Connaghan CBE
Chief Executive Professor Caroline Hiscox

Lothian NHS Board is the common name of Lothian Health Board

Our Values Into Action

disability confident LEADER

CARER POSITIVE Employer in Scotland EXEMPLARY

We are a Living Wage Employer

a. How many staff include a link to *pronouns.org* (or similar websites) in their email signatures or internal profiles?
b. Does your organisation promote, endorse, or direct staff toward pronouns.org or similar guidance? Does your organisation endorse the content of pronouns.org?
c. Please share any documents, training materials, or communications that reference or recommend this website.

Answer:

a.	*NHS Lothian does not collect this information. As per Section 17 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 formally I must advise that we do not hold this information.*
b.	*No, NHS Lothian does not promote or endorse any guidance from third party or external organisations about the use of pronouns.*
c	*We have reviewed NHS Lothian Equality and Human Rights education resources and there is no reference to pronouns.org in any of the training materials, communications or documents.*

Question:
4. Internal communications and staff responses
    a. Please provide copies of any communications or briefings sent to staff regarding the use of pronouns in email signatures.
    b. Has your organisation received any objections, complaints, or concerns from staff in relation to pronoun guidance or expectations?
    c. If so, please provide the number of cases and any summaries you hold, including whether any issues were raised by staff with gender-critical beliefs or staff citing religious beliefs.

Answer:

a.	*NHS Lothian has not issued any organisation-wide communications or briefings specifically about pronouns in email signatures. As per Section 17 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 formally I must advise that we do not hold this information.*
b.	*Yes*
c.	*Concern was raised about the Microsoft 365 pronouns feature. This is an optional feature that allows MS 365 users to share their pronouns if they want to, it also allows users to have no pronouns. The concern was about this feature being enabled and who decided it should be. The change was enabled by the NHS Scotland Microsoft 365 Information Governance Change Advisory Board. No information was provided about staff member's beliefs.*

Question:
5. Impact considerations
    a. Have any Equality Impact Assessments or similar assessments been carried out regarding your organisation's approach to pronoun use?

b.   If so, please provide copies or summaries of these assessments.

Answer:

a.	*No, NHS Lothian has not carried out an Equality Impact Assessment specifically on pronoun use in email signatures.*
b.	*We hold no such documents.*
	As per Section 17 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 formally I must advise that we do not hold this information.

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. 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.nhslothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing
Cc: Chief Executive
Enc.

Email: Acceptable Use

The NHS Lothian email service is provided for business use. When email is sent from an NHS Mail account from an NHS Lothian member of staff, the recipient will tend to view that message as an official statement from NHS Lothian.

The NHS Lothian email system shall not to be used for any of the following:

a. Any activity that violates the laws and regulations of the United Kingdom. Without exception, such incidents will be referred to the police.

b. The creation or distribution of any disruptive or offensive messages, including offensive comments relating to protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010; sex, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, race, and religion or belief.

c. Subscribing to non-business related mailings and/or newsletters.

d. Sending or forwarding chain letters, jokes and other non-business related files such as personal photographs, Windows media files, MP3 music files and any other media/audio files.

e. Sending non business-related attachments. When staff are using the email system for personal use, they must comply with all NHS Lothian email guidance and be aware that the NHS mail gateways, which are nationally managed, block many of these file types.

f. Mass emailing (over 50 addresses) without prior authorisation.

g. Sending virus or other malware warnings, unless requested by NHS Lothian IT Security staff.

h. The sending of confidential or patient identifiable information, out with the approved mail address lists or groups. This list will be revised regularly and published separately in the Safe Email Transmission (available to staff via the NHS Lothian intranet)

i. Emailing externally attachments over 15 Mb. (NHS external mail connections are set nationally at a maximum of 18 Mb which includes text, metadata, and attachment)

1. Personal use:

a. Using an insignificant amount of NHS Lothian resources for personal emails is acceptable. Non-work related email should be saved separately from work related email.

b. Staff should remember that they should not use their NHS Mail account for subscriptions to non-work related email newsletters. (The selling of email address lists is, although illegal in the UK, one of the primary sources of addresses for spam)

c. Following the recommendations of the Information Commissioner during an Audit of NHS Lothian's compliance with Data Protection and handling laws the use of non-NHS web mail services is not recommended.

d. Staff should not access personal Internet Service Provider (ISP) mail accounts, as accessing these directly and significantly increases the risk of introducing malware into the NHS infrastructure.

2. Monitoring

a. NHS scans all incoming and outgoing emails for SPAM, viruses, inappropriate content, restricted and prohibited file types.

b. NHS Lothian may be required under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 or other relevant legislation to produce emails sent or received by any member of staff in answer to a request for information

c. Messages quarantined or blocked by the system may be inspected and read by IT Security before being deleted or released. In some cases, users can request a quarantined email to be released if it is safe i.e. from a known source and is expected.

d. Messages blocked will be held for a maximum of fourteen days after which they will be deleted.

e. Emails from an "unknown" source may be quarantined and automatically deleted. An "unknown" source is where an email sender has contrived to hide or disguise the source of the email usually the email carries some form of malware.

f. Users should not attempt to change the type of file extension on attachments to avoid files being blocked. This increases the probability of the email being quarantined.

g. Where there is a reasonable ground for suspicion that email may have been used by an individual to contravene existing NHS Lothian policies including those relating to Confidentiality or Dignity at Work, the Director of Digital may authorise the monitoring of an individual's email traffic and if appropriate, a search through any server archived email.

3. Forwarding of Mail & scanned documents

a. When staff wish to grant access to their email to someone whilst away for a period of time they should use "rules" to forward mail or grant a colleague delegate access to their mailbox. Auto forward to external organisations and personal email accounts is not permitted

b. Staff should not use "rule of reply to" which auto directs the recipient to reply to the email to any 3rd party, which doesn't appear on the original email message.

c. Staff are not permitted to scan and send any organisational documents to their own personal email accounts.

4. Clinical and "Generic" Mailboxes

a. Clinical and shared mail accounts may be set up to meet clinical or business needs. Each of these accounts should have a specific owner who is responsible for checking the contents of the mailbox and approving and granting delegate access to any other member of staff. When mail is sent from such a mailbox it will show as being sent by the owner or delegate on behalf of the shared email title.