

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – NURSING STAFF ABSENCE

I write in response to your request for information in relation to nursing staff absence in NHS Lothian.

Question:

1. Please provide the following information in relation to nursing (excluding midwifery) staff sickness absence within the NHS Board for each of the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 year to date at 31 December 2025: The number by sickness absence reasons for: a) sickness absence episodes; b) working days lost; c) number of staff absent.
2. Please provide the following information in relation to Agenda for Change bands 5-9 nursing (excluding midwifery) staff sickness absence within the NHS Board for each of the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 year to date at 31 December 2025: The number by sickness absence reasons for: a) sickness absence episodes; b) working days lost; c) number of staff absent.
3. Please provide the following information in relation to Agenda for Change bands 2-4 nursing (excluding midwifery) staff sickness absence within the NHS Board for each of the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 year to date at 31 December 2025: The number by sickness absence reasons for: a) sickness absence episodes; b) working days lost; c) number of staff absent
4. Please provide the sickness absence rate for nursing staff in the NHS Board at 31 March for each of the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 year to date at 31 December 2025 for a) all nursing staff b) Agenda for Change bands 5-9 and c) Agenda for Change bands 2-4.

Answer:

The information you have requested is detailed in the attached spreadsheet.

I have not released numbers of 5 or fewer in the table, as this information could lead to the identification of the individuals involved. Since we do not have their consent to release their personal data, the information is exempt under section 38 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 as to provide it would breach the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018.

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 <https://www.foi.scot/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 reviewer at the address at the top 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>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director of Nursing Midwifery and AHPs
Cc: Chief Executive

Notes:

Sickness Absence includes nursing job family group only.
Excludes Midwifery and Neonatal.

FY 2025/YTD includes sickness absence between 1st April 2025 to 31st December 2025.

Please note an employees working pattern varies from individual to individual. A working day can be anything from 1 hour to 12.5 hours.

It is important to note that employees may be counted more than once within 'Number of Staff'. For example, if an employee has been absent for three different sickness absence reasons, they will be counted three times.

Q1. Please provide the following information in relation to nursing* staff sickness absence within the NHS Board for each of the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 year to date at 31 December 2025
A. Please see below tables. The below table notes any nursing staff whose absent started and occurred within the same Financial Year.

Table 1: Financial Year 2024/25

AbsenceReason Description	Working Days Lost	No. of Staff	No. Of Episodes
Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illnesses	31,247	1,623	2,202
Asthma	197	43	55
Back problems	5,883	672	811
Benign and malignant tumours, cancers	2,084	49	54
Blood disorders	188	24	26
Burns, poisoning, frostbite, hypothermia	53	17	17
Chest & respiratory problems	5,451	1,007	1,151
Cold, cough, flu - influenza	15,992	4,773	6,318
Covid-related illness	2,581	683	708
Dental & oral problems	698	303	329
Ear, nose, throat (ENT)	2,091	552	605
Endocrine/glandular problems	579	56	74
Eye problems	858	131	146
Gastro-intestinal problems	11,361	3,738	4,940
Genitourinary & gynaecological disorders - exclude pregnancy related disorders	3,414	577	709
Headache/migraine	3,064	1,144	1,443
Heart, cardiac & circulatory problems	1,763	155	193
Infectious diseases	446	80	82
Injury, fracture	6,892	597	657
Menopause	560	36	45
Menstrual Health Related Illness	25	7	7
Nervous system disorders - exclude headache, migraine	1,344	115	129
Other known causes - not otherwise classified	11,177	1,501	1,881
Other musculoskeletal problems	9,787	838	1,010
Pregnancy related disorders	3,496	322	668
Skin disorders	1,011	161	188
Substance abuse - include alcoholism & drug dependence	346	7	10
Unknown causes/not specified	7,941	1,856	2,459
Violence & Aggression	18	7	7

Table 2: Financial Year 2025/YTD

AbsenceReason Description	Working Days Lost	No. of Staff	No. Of Episodes
Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illnesses	26,659	1,475	1,909
Asthma	163	38	46
Back problems	4,313	531	617
Benign and malignant tumours, cancers	1,672	46	56
Blood disorders	105	15	16
Burns, poisoning, frostbite, hypothermia	68	15	17
Chest & respiratory problems	2,660	576	644
Cold, cough, flu - influenza	11,135	3,761	4,551
Covid-related illness	772	198	205
Dental & oral problems	603	261	287
Ear, nose, throat (ENT)	1,406	396	428
Endocrine/glandular problems	359	57	61
Eye problems	911	138	150
Gastro-intestinal problems	10,118	3,224	3,994
Genitourinary & gynaecological disorders - exclude pregnancy related disorders	3,630	510	650
Headache/migraine	2,384	996	1,186
Heart, cardiac & circulatory problems	1,338	145	158
Infectious diseases	341	68	72
Injury, fracture	5,255	486	521
Menopause	226	27	33
Menstrual Health Related Illness	17	6	6
Nervous system disorders - exclude headache, migraine	1,016	82	101
Other known causes - not otherwise classified	10,879	1,400	1,732
Other musculoskeletal problems	7,975	685	807
Pregnancy related disorders	3,011	290	563
Skin disorders	538	121	132
Substance abuse - include alcoholism & drug dependence	109	5	6
Unknown causes/not specified	4,613	1,352	1,587
Violence & Aggression	20	7	7

Q2. Please provide the following information in relation to Agenda for Change bands 5-9 nursing* staff sickness absence within the NHS Board for each of the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 year to date at 31 December 2025:
A. Please see Table 3. The below table notes any registered nursing staff whose absent started and occurred within the same Financial Year.

Table 3: Financial Year 2024/25

AbsenceReason Description	Working Days Lost	No. of Staff	No. Of Episodes
Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illnesses	19,291	1,027	1,391
Asthma	143	32	37
Back problems	2,982	399	463
Benign and malignant tumours, cancers	1,456	33	37
Blood disorders	151	17	19
Burns, poisoning, frostbite, hypothermia	14	5	5
Chest & respiratory problems	3,105	642	723
Cold, cough, flu - influenza	10,757	3,273	4,311
Covid-related illness	1,674	442	460
Dental & oral problems	448	181	195
Ear, nose, throat (ENT)	1,510	363	399
Endocrine/glandular problems	320	37	46
Eye problems	639	87	96
Gastro-intestinal problems	7,239	2,450	3,146
Genitourinary & gynaecological disorders - exclude pregnancy related disorders	1,988	354	426
Headache/migraine	2,223	795	972
Heart, cardiac & circulatory problems	976	85	109
Infectious diseases	216	53	55
Injury, fracture	4,003	355	387
Menopause	343	27	35
Menstrual Health Related Illness	6	<5	<5
Nervous system disorders - exclude headache, migraine	980	74	84
Other known causes - not otherwise classified	7,707	994	1,277
Other musculoskeletal problems	5,324	468	546
Pregnancy related disorders	2,307	230	458
Skin disorders	438	84	98
Substance abuse - include alcoholism & drug dependence	93	<5	<5
Unknown causes/not specified	5,083	1,134	1,475
Violence & Aggression	<5	<5	<5

Table 4: Financial Year 2025/YTD

AbsenceReason Description	Working Days Lost	No. of Staff	No. Of Episodes
Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illnesses	17,656	1,008	1,299
Asthma	50	20	21
Back problems	2,425	318	373
Benign and malignant tumours, cancers	1,285	34	42
Blood disorders	90	11	11
Burns, poisoning, frostbite, hypothermia	22	6	6
Chest & respiratory problems	1,646	383	420
Cold, cough, flu - influenza	8,036	2,716	3,286
Covid-related illness	482	130	135
Dental & oral problems	363	168	182
Ear, nose, throat (ENT)	933	284	302
Endocrine/glandular problems	292	41	45
Eye problems	524	88	94
Gastro-intestinal problems	6,821	2,149	2,577
Genitourinary & gynaecological disorders - exclude pregnancy related disorders	2,408	330	410
Headache/migraine	1,638	682	814
Heart, cardiac & circulatory problems	804	90	101
Infectious diseases	232	44	47
Injury, fracture	3,181	304	324
Menopause	181	18	22
Menstrual Health Related Illness	17	6	6
Nervous system disorders - exclude headache, migraine	754	54	64
Other known causes - not otherwise classified	7,641	951	1,192
Other musculoskeletal problems	4,610	401	452
Pregnancy related disorders	2,182	215	405
Skin disorders	329	70	79
Substance abuse - include alcoholism & drug dependence	107	<5	5
Unknown causes/not specified	3,136	867	1,021
Violence & Aggression	18	6	6

Q3. Please provide the following information in relation to Agenda for Change bands 2-4 nursing* staff sickness absence within the NHS Board for each of the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 year to date at 31 December 2025:
A. Please see Table 3. The below table notes any unregistered nursing staff whose absent started and occurred within the same Financial Year.

Table 5: Financial Year 2024/25

AbsenceReason Description	Working Days Lost	No. of Staff	No. Of Episodes
Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illnesses	11,956	597	812
Asthma	54	11	18
Back problems	2,902	273	348
Benign and malignant tumours, cancers	628	16	17
Blood disorders	37	7	7
Burns, poisoning, frostbite, hypothermia	39	12	12
Chest & respiratory problems	2,346	365	428
Cold, cough, flu - influenza	5,235	1,500	2,007
Covid-related illness	907	241	248
Dental & oral problems	250	122	134
Ear, nose, throat (ENT)	581	189	206
Endocrine/glandular problems	259	19	28

Table 6: Financial Year 2025/YTD

AbsenceReason Description	Working Days Lost	No. of Staff	No. Of Episodes
Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illnesses	9,003	467	610
Asthma	113	18	25
Back problems	1,888	213	244
Benign and malignant tumours, cancers	387	12	14
Blood disorders	15	<5	5
Burns, poisoning, frostbite, hypothermia	46	9	11
Chest & respiratory problems	1,015	193	224
Cold, cough, flu - influenza	3,099	1,049	1,266
Covid-related illness	291	68	70
Dental & oral problems	240	94	105
Ear, nose, throat (ENT)	474	112	126
Endocrine/glandular problems	67	16	16

Eye problems	220	44	50
Gastro-intestinal problems	4,122	1,288	1,794
Genitourinary & gynaecological disorders - exclude pregnancy related disorders	1,426	223	283
Headache/migraine	841	349	471
Heart, cardiac & circulatory problems	788	70	84
Infectious diseases	230	27	27
Injury, fracture	2,890	242	270
Menopause	217	9	10
Menstrual Health Related Illness	19	<5	<5
Nervous system disorders - exclude headache, migraine	365	41	45
Other known causes - not otherwise classified	3,470	507	604
Other musculoskeletal problems	4,464	370	464
Pregnancy related disorders	1,189	92	210
Skin disorders	574	77	90
Substance abuse - include alcoholism & drug dependence	253	<5	6
Unknown causes/not specified	2,858	722	984
Violence & Aggression	16	6	6

Eye problems	387	50	56
Gastro-intestinal problems	3,297	1,083	1,419
Genitourinary & gynaecological disorders - exclude pregnancy related disorders	1,222	180	240
Headache/migraine	747	314	372
Heart, cardiac & circulatory problems	535	55	57
Infectious diseases	109	24	25
Injury, fracture	2,074	183	198
Menopause	46	9	11
Menstrual Health Related Illness	0	0	0
Nervous system disorders - exclude headache, migraine	262	30	38
Other known causes - not otherwise classified	3,238	451	540
Other musculoskeletal problems	3,365	284	355
Pregnancy related disorders	829	75	158
Skin disorders	209	52	54
Substance abuse - include alcoholism & drug dependence	<5	<5	<5
Unknown causes/not specified	1,477	487	567
Violence & Aggression	<5	<5	<5

4. Please provide the sickness absence rate for nursing staff in the NHS Board at 31 March for each of the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 year to date at 31 December 2025 for a) all nursing staff b) Agenda for Change bands 5-9 and c) Agenda for Change bands 2-4.

A. Please see table 7.

Table 7	Mar-25	Dec-25
Registered Nursing	5.56%	7.71%
Unregistered Nursing	9.40%	10.64%
Total Nursing	6.63%	8.50%