

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – SUPPORTING PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

I write in response to your request for information in relation to consultant Supporting Professional Activities in NHS Lothian.

Question:

1. The number of substantive consultants employed (headcount and WTE).

Answer:

The information you have requested is detailed in the table below. These figures include clinical academics:

Consultant posts, NHS Lothian, February 2026		
Post	Headcount	WTE
Substantive	1,390	1,119.54
Locum	45	32.13

Question:

2. Your organisation's current standard (or reference) job plan for a full-time consultant, including the normal DCC/SPA split. (Please provide the document or template if available).

Answer:

NHS Lothian does not have a standard job plan for a full-time consultant as this will vary across services. Normal practice is that an indicative job plan would be 9 DCC and 1 SPA before appointment, and this is then negotiated between the Consultant and their Clinical Director in terms of additional SPA time reflecting their skills and departmental requirements.

Question:

3. Number of consultant posts with SPA time and total SPAs allocated.

Answer:

The job planning recorded in April 2025 reported that 1,184 consultants have SPA time in the job plans (includes 16 locums). There are 2,308.17 SPAs in total (includes 20.22 locum SPAs).

Question:

4. Typical SPA allocation in a 10-PA contract.

Answer:

The split of SPA varies; there is no typical allocation, but the minimum would be 1 SPA.

Question:

5. How many consultant posts have no SPA time allocated?

Answer:

No consultant with a job plan in the system has no SPA time allocated.

Question:

6. Count of consultants according to the number of SPAs stated in their job plan: a) <1.0 SPA; b) 1.0–1.4 SPA; c) 1.5–1.9 SPA; d) 2.0–2.4 SPA; e) ≥2.5 SPA.

Answer:

The information you have requested is detailed in the table below. This includes substantive and locum consultants but does not include clinical academics.

Consultants by number of SPA in job plan, NHS Lothian, April 2025		
Category	Headcount	SPAs
<1.00 SPA	38	25.05
>2.50 SPA	275	320.52
1.00-1.49 SPA	300	506.13
1.50-1.99 SPA	325	680.93
2.00-2.49 SPA	246	775.55

Question:

7. Since 1 April 2020, have there been any changes to SPA allocation policy or the standard consultant DCC/SPA split? Yes/No

8. If yes, please provide the any available documentation and briefly outline these changes.

Answer:

No, there has been no change to the policy.

Question:

9. Does your organisation have a policy or standard approach for recognising external professional duties such as: a) Roles for Royal Colleges / Faculties; b) Specialist societies or associations; c) National clinical networks, guideline groups or NHS national bodies; d)

Regulatory roles (e.g., GMC, NICE). Please answer: Yes/No. If yes, provide the policy or a summary.

Answer:

Yes, in NHS Lothian we have a job planning framework document (attached) which details the approach for external duties. Please note that this version is currently being discussed with our LNC and therefore is in the process of being updated.

Question:

10. For consultants who currently hold such external or national duties, please provide the number who: a) Have allocated PA(s); b) Are permitted to use existing SPA allocation; c) Undertake these duties in their own time.

Answer:

93 consultants have allocated PAs. External and national duties are listed separately as 'external duties' rather than as SPA. 102 consultants undertake this work in their own time. These figures do not include clinical academics.

Question:

11. Does the organisation monitor whether planned SPA time is delivered? Yes/No

12. If yes, please provide a short description of the method.

Answer:

No, this is not monitored centrally in NHS Lothian, but delivery of outputs from SPA time are be discussed at the annual job planning meeting.

Question:

13. Does the organisation have a policy or guidance on the protection of SPA time (e.g., discouraging routine cancellation or repurposing SPA for service pressures)? Yes/No

14. If yes, please provide the document.

Answer:

No, there is no specific policy.

Question:

15. Summary of activities SPA time was used for (e.g. education, CPD, audit, research, governance, external duties, etc).

Answer:

SPA time is used for the following categories: Undergraduate/Postgraduate Training; Research; Local Governance; Audit; CPD; Job Planning; Appraisal; Statutory Training; and

Attendance at management activity. Other Non DCC activity includes: Additional NHS Responsibilities; and External duties.

Question:

16. For each of the past five complete job-planning years, please provide an annual summary showing: a) Number of consultants with SPA time; b) Total or average SPA time allocated (total SPA PAs or average per consultant); c) Total or estimated SPA time used in that year.

Answer:

The information you have requested is detailed in the table below. These figures do not include clinical academics:

Consultant SPA, NHS Lothian			
Year	Total SPAs	Total SPA hours	Headcount Consultants with SPAs
2021	2,106.68	8,426.72	1,096
2022	2,190.34	8,761.36	1,133
2023	2,278.81	9,115.24	1,154
2024	2,302.79	9,211.16	1,175
2025	2,311.90	9,247.60	1,192

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