

Date 23 July 2026
Your Ref
Our Ref 11620

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Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – MATERNITY DIVERTS

I write in response to your request for information in relation to maternity divers.

Question:

- I am writing to request under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 that the health board disclose all information it holds detailing how many recorded instances there were of maternity and neonatal services being placed on 'divert' over the course of 2023/24, 2024/25, and 2025/26, meaning that they were temporarily closed to new admissions, with patients being redirected to alternative hospitals.

The disclosure should include, but not be limited to, a year-by-year breakdown of how many patients were impacted, the hospitals where the patients were diverted from, where they were eventually treated, and a brief summary of why the services were placed on 'divert' on each occasion.

Answer:

Recorded Divert Episodes

Financial Year	Recorded Divert Episodes
2023/24	5<
2024/25	11
2025/26	101 (10 pre-SOP launch in September 2025)

A maternity divert is a planned safety measure temporarily redirecting women to another unit where safe staffing and capacity are available. Divers are used routinely across all Scottish Health Boards.

NHS Lothian introduced a formal Maternity Divert Standard Operating Procedure and recording process in September 2025 following the Healthcare Improvement Scotland Safe Delivery of Care visit in June 2025. Prior to this, only a small number of divert episodes were formally recorded on our incident reporting system. Of the 117 episodes reported, 26 occurred before September 2025. The increase in recorded episodes reflects improved recording and governance rather than an increase in frequency.

An episode represents a period during which a unit's intake was managed on a case-by-case or full divert basis. Episodes can range from 30 minutes to a full day, and more than one can occur on the same day. The number of episodes is not equivalent to the number of days affected.

Hospitals Involved

Recorded diversions occurred between the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and St John's Hospital, Livingston, and externally to neighbouring Health Boards including NHS Borders, NHS Fife, NHS Forth Valley and NHS Lanarkshire.

Reasons for Divert

Most common reasons for divert:

- Midwifery staffing pressures
- High levels of maternity activity
- Clinical acuity
- Bed and labour ward capacity constraints

Other recorded reasons included neonatal unit capacity pressures and, less frequently, estates, equipment, IT or theatre and medical staffing pressures.

Patients Affected

Patient numbers were not systematically recorded for divert episodes. Where figures were stated, they are small (5 or fewer) and disclosure could risk identifying individuals. This information has therefore been withheld under section 38(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 – personal 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.nhsllothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing
Cc: Chief Executive