

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – NURSE MENTAL HEALTH ABSENCE

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

Question:

1. The number of instances of nurse absences due to stress, anxiety, depression or other psychiatric illness in total in the last six years. Please express this data in two ways: firstly in calendar years (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 so far) and financial year (2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 so far). By number of instances of absence I mean the overall number of absences recorded (which may include multiple absences taken by the same nurse several times).
2. The number of nurses by headcount who took an absence due to stress anxiety, depression, or other psychiatric illness in the last six years. Please express this data in two ways: firstly in calendar years (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 so far) and financial year (2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 so far). This request differs from request 1 because I am asking for the number of nurses who officially took an absence NOT the number of instances of absence which may count the same officer multiple times. For example, 350 nurses may have taken an absence but there may be 472 recorded instances of absence.
3. The number of working hours lost due to nurse mental health absences broken down by the last seven financial years (2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 so far). When I use the term nurse I am referring to all bands/grades.

Answer:

The information you have requested is detailed in the table below. Please note for context that NHS Lothian employs more than 11,000 nursing and midwifery staff, and the working hours lost for mental health absence represent approximately 1.85% of their total annual contracted hours.

Nurse absence with reason 'anxiety / stress / depression / other psychiatric illness', NHS Lothian			
Year	Instances of absence	Headcount absences	Working hours lost
2019/20	923	727	129,995.68
2020/21	1,075	856	148,351.23
2021/22	1,227	962	155,365.50
2022/23	1,038	888	154,131.53
2023/24	1,277	969	161,804.32
2024/25	1,448	1,069	171,790.53
2025/26	1,565	1,169	192,677.57

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.nhsllothian.scot/FOI>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
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 Cc: Chief Executive