Lothian NHS Board

NHS Lothian Headquarters
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Date 2 November 2026
Your Ref
Our Ref 11984

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
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Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – STAFF SHORTAGES

I write in response to your request for information in relation to staff shortages.

Question:
1. The number of complaints received in which staff shortages, understaffing or inadequate staffing levels were alleged or identified as contributing to the death of a patient.
2. Of these complaints, the number where an investigation concluded that staffing shortages were identified as a contributing factor to the patient's death.

Answer:

We have completed a search of Datix complaints records for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2026 using the terms:

- staff shortages / staff shortage
- understaffing / under staffed
- inadequate staffing levels / inadequate staffing

The complaints identified through this search were reviewed and no complaints were identified in which staff shortages, understaffing or inadequate staffing levels were alleged to have contributed to the death of a patient.

Question:
3. The number of deaths investigated through an incident investigation, serious incident investigation, mortality review or equivalent process where staffing shortages were identified as a contributing factor.
4. Where available, please provide a year-by-year breakdown.
5. Where available, please provide the relevant department or service involved, such as:
   * Emergency Department/A&E
   * Inpatient wards
   * Maternity
   * Paediatrics
   * Mental health
   * Community services
   * Other

6. Where available, please state how many of these cases resulted in:
   * A formal investigation
   * A finding of failings in staffing levels
   * Recommendations for changes to staffing levels
   * A referral to an external organisation or regulator
   * A coroner's involvement

Answer:

We have searched on the Adverse Event Category **Staffing Issues** and there were five or fewer adverse events reported on DATIX. We are unable to search on the "outcome of the review" (contributory factor), therefore there is nothing further we can provide in relation to this request

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