Lothian NHS Board

NHS Lothian Headquarters
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Date 12 November 2026
Your Ref
Our Ref 12079

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
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Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

I write in response to your request for information in relation to incidents of violence and aggression

Question:

1. Annual totals of incidents
   For each calendar year from 1 January 2018 to the date of this request in 2026, please provide the total number of recorded incidents of violence and aggression perpetrated by patients against staff working in Emergency Departments.

   Please provide one annual total for each year, covering the following periods:
   - 2018: 1 January – 31 December 2018
   - 2019: 1 January – 31 December 2019
   - 2020: 1 January – 31 December 2020
   - 2021: 1 January – 31 December 2021
   - 2022: 1 January – 31 December 2022
   - 2023: 1 January – 31 December 2023
   - 2024: 1 January – 31 December 2024
   - 2025: 1 January – 31 December 2025
   - 2026: 1 January – the date on which this request is received or processed, using the latest available data

Answer:

We have provided data reported under the adverse event category of **Violence/aggression/other unwanted behaviours**. There were 549 adverse events (incidents) reported of Violence & Aggression carried out in NHS Lothian Emergency Departments towards staff by patients between 01/01/2018 to 20/10/2026 (Date of FOI). The data is broken down by Calendar Year.

Year	Events
2018	42
2019	48
2020	36
2021	43

2022	67
2023	54
2024	70
2025	57
2026	132

In 2026 thus far it is higher than other years but we would suggest a culture of underreporting in previous years rather than a surge of violence towards staff in our Emergency Departments in 2026.

One of the factors that could be influencing the rise is that we now have a dedicated training programme established for higher risk acute staff and spend more time with them reinforcing the importance of adverse event recording. This was embedded throughout 2025. We are in regular contact with the Emergency Department's and they are not expressing an increase in concern about their exposure to the risk despite the spike in records.

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