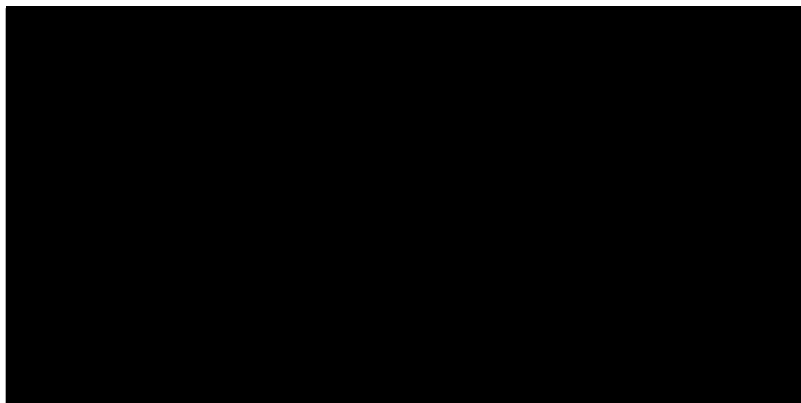


5 October 2020



Re: Official Information Request – sick staff due to Covid and hospital occupancy rate

I refer to your official information request dated 10 September 2020 requesting the following information:

1. How has Covid-19 affected staffing? In terms of staying home as if the slightest bit sick.

We have been advising all employees to stay at home if unwell (and to get a test if displaying COVID-19 symptoms). We do not collect information on the reason for staff sickness absence and are therefore unable to provide comparisons on previous years.

We have had a number of people working from home during 2020 as part of our response to COVID-19 and flexible working approach, which may have impacted the number of employees absent due to sickness with mild COVID-19-like symptoms.

2. What was your rate of sick leave from March - September 2019 compared to the same period 2020?

Below is the data relating to the period requested. This only includes sickness absence and not other forms of leave (e.g. special leave) that may have been given during the period.

Month	2019	2020
March	4.08%	4.71%
April	3.89%	2.80%
May	4.56%	4.21%
June	5.05%	4.31%

July	5.05%	5.07%
August	4.75%	4.24%
September*	4.02%	3.36%
Overall for period	4.61%	4.04%

*Note: September 2020 is only up to 13 September. The data is not yet available for the whole month.

3. How has the DHB managed this?

Auckland DHB has well-established processes in place for managing staff absence. Hospital capacity and staff availability is reviewed daily. Decisions regarding the deployment of staff are part of our daily operational management.

It is worth noting that following the first period of alert level 2, 3 and 4 (in March/April/May 2020), the number of people attending our emergency departments and who were in hospital significantly reduced. We were therefore able to continue to care for patients with the staffing available to us.

4. What was the DHB's average occupancy rate for March - September 2019 compared to the same period 2020? Can this please be broken down by month rather than lumped together.

Below is the data for the period requested. We have included midnight bed occupancy in the table below. This therefore does not include patients discharged on the day of admission, day case beds or emergency department trolleys.

Months	Adults		Children's		Maternity		Mental health		Total	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
March	19,086	18,573	3,234	2,956	1,525	1,718	2,970	3,034	26,815	26,281
April	20,004	14,250	3,123	2,074	1,267	1,393	3,108	2,490	27,502	20,207
May	21,469	18,768	3,428	2,860	1,232	1,815	3,272	3,097	29,401	26,540
June	21,184	20,775	3,281	2,862	1,241	1,843	3,075	3,237	28,781	28,717
July	22,177	22,226	3,660	3,059	2,006	2,010	3,220	3,233	31,063	30,528
August	22,757	22,020	3,583	3,084	1,944	1,808	3,236	3,197	31,520	30,109
September*	21,588	20,998	3,243	2,816	1,838	1,866	3,158	3,241	29,827	28,921

5. Has this resulted in the DHB having to activate an action plan or escalation plan for wards? i.e. adults being put on children wards where there is more staffing etc.

As part of our planning for and response to COVID-19, we developed action plans in the event that large numbers of staff were unable to work or the number of patients presenting overwhelmed our hospital capacity.

We have not needed to activate these specific plans as our sickness absence levels have remained broadly consistent with the previous year and we have seen relatively small numbers of patients with COVID-19 in our hospitals.

We continue to review staffing and hospital occupancy on a daily basis and make decisions to ensure our hospitals and clinical services remain safe.

We have not placed children on adult wards due to staffing or hospital occupancy.

You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Auckland DHB website.

Yours faithfully



Ailsa Claire, OBE
Chief Executive

