

Trust Headquarters  
 Russell's Hall Hospital  
 Dudley  
 West Midlands  
 DY1 2HQ

**Ref:** FOI-000336

**Date:** 29/9/23

**Address / Email:**

Dear

**Request Under Freedom of Information Act 2000**

Thank you for requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I've included a list of questions below, and I'd appreciate any responses:

1. What is the name of your Trust? - The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust
2. What is the current sickness rate for your staff for LTS and STS?

	Long Term Absence FTE %	Short Term Absence FTE %
In month Aug 23	2.38%	2.30%
Rolling 12 month	2.83%	2.12%

**Prevention of sickness absence:**

1. What does your Trust do, in order to prevent sickness absence?

The Trust has a broad wellbeing offer in place focusing on a holistic approach to wellbeing both in terms of supporting staff who are absent from work due to ill health and in terms of prevention. The wellbeing offer includes (but is not limited to) an EAP service with CBT/Counselling included, In-house Occupational Health function, Staff Physiotherapy service, Wellbeing champions, Designated Wellbeing Business Partner, employee benefits and financial wellbeing packages, discounted gym memberships, resources and signposting to wellbeing advice such as health eating, hydration, alcohol and substance misuse awareness and smoking cessation. We have a dedicated wellbeing steering group that feeds into The People Committee, which is a sub committee to the Board. Analysis of key workforce metrics and key performance indicators are regularly analysed at both Trust level, staff group level and Team/department level where bespoke action plans are put in place where there are wellbeing indicators leading to higher levels of absence.

2. To what degree (rating on a scale of one to ten), do you feel as if your organisation has measures in place, in order to prevent sickness absence? - 8/10

3. It seems apparent that to prevent sickness absence, a healthy workplace is needed. How does your Trust do this? If they don't, what do you feel as if they should be doing? - Through the wellbeing offer as described above.

4. What (if anything), do you feel as if your organisation could do to prevent sickness further? We are in the process of launching a health and wellbeing strategy, this is expected to be in place by November 2023. Closer links and partnerships with local healthcare services where our own staff are also patients with the Trust and establish if there is a possibility of staff being seen by specialists sooner, which would ensure staff return to work sooner or prevent staff from reaching a point of needing to take absence in the first place.

5. Does your Trust offer 'duvet days' or days off, related to mental health reasons, but doesn't trigger towards formal sickness management? - No.

*If so, have you found that since implementing such scheme, sickness absence has reduced? If not, is this something that your Trust would consider? What's your personal opinion on this?*

6. To what degree do you feel as if your Trust works in a way which accommodates flexible working? The Trust has a newly refreshed Flexible working policy and is about to re-launch manager training on supporting flexible working with a focus on shifting mindsets to make flexible working the norm rather than the exception. There is a flexible working group that meets quarterly. There is still some hesitancy in mindsets around flexible working, particularly in rostered clinical areas where some flexible working requests are harder to accommodate.

7. Do you think that your Trust could be doing anything further, to promote and implement flexible working schemes, specifically with the intention of reducing sickness absence? - Not specifically with the intention of reducing sickness absence but overall we feel that this needs to be a culture change and we are on the journey to changing cultures and mindsets.

#### **Impact on Patient Care:**

8. How does your Trust reduce the impact on patient care, through high levels of sickness absence?

- Effective rostering, reviewing the skills mix of the staffing in clinical areas, redeployment of individuals, utilising bank staff for gaps in the roster

9. What does your wellbeing support look like, within your Trust? Does this have a correlation to the sickness absence within your organisation? - As described above. Sickness absence rates are showing a downwards trend consistently over the last 12 months. The staff survey results for 2022 showed a significant improvement in the staff experiences of being supported with their wellbeing when compared with the 2021 results.

10. Please could you send me a copy of your Sickness Absence Policy – Please see attached. To note that a new sickness absence policy has been written called 'Supporting Attendance Policy' and is in the final stages of ratification and therefore we are unable to share this policy until the final ratification has taken place. It is expected this will launch in October 2023.

***For a copy of the Sickness Absence Policy please contact [dgft.foi@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.foi@nhs.net) quoting reference 000336***

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you have the right to appeal in line with guidance from the Information Commissioner. In the first instance you may contact the Information Governance Manager of the Trust.

Information Governance Manager  
Trust Headquarters

FOI/REF FOI-

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Should you disagree with the contents of our response to your appeal, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioners Office at.

Information Commissioners Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF  
Tel: 0303 123 1113  
[www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

If you require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

**Freedom of Information Team**  
**The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust**