



**Waitematā**  
District Health Board  
**Best Care for Everyone**

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20 May 2019



Dear 

**Re: Official Information Act request - Assaults against nursing staff**

Thank you for your Official Information Act request, received 24 April 2019 concerning details of nursing staff who have been assaulted by members of the public from 2013 – 2018.

Before responding to your questions, some contextual information about our population and our services may be useful and assist your understanding of the information provided.

Waitematā DHB serves the largest population of any district health board in New Zealand, currently standing at more than 630,000 people. There is a direct link between the size of our population and the significant scale of services we provide and the opportunity for aggression towards our staff.

Our DHB has a workforce of more than 7500 staff spread across more than 80 sites. In addition to caring for our own population, we are also the metropolitan Auckland provider of forensic psychiatry, child disability services, child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services.

Ultimately, our employees deal with a broad cross-section of the community in their day-to-day work and this often involves reaching out to people when they are at their most vulnerable and anxious, including those with mental health conditions, which can result in unpredictable behaviours. Caution is, therefore, advised in comparing raw event numbers between different district health boards unless it is clear the breadth of service-delivery and clinical caseload is of similar complexity.

Waitematā DHB encourages the reporting of assault and promotes a policy of ensuring that the safety and security of staff and patients is approached in line with our organisational values as follows:

**Everyone Matters**

We have a responsibility to be welcoming and respectful and to listen, while maintaining the personal safety of our staff. We will equip staff with strategies to manage care where behaviour is a concern, whether it is their own or the behaviour of others.

Our approach will be professional and consistent wherever care is delivered, be it in hospital, a community facility or at home.

We all have a responsibility to report risks and incidents and to take care of ourselves and others - to not walk by.

#### **With Compassion**

Safety and security initiatives will protect personal dignity and will be as unobtrusive as possible. If someone's behaviour compromises the safety of others, we will ensure a fair and balanced response. We will be attentive to people's individual circumstances and provide an opportunity for people to modify behaviour before using security measures.

#### **Connected**

All safety and security initiatives will link with our Engagement Strategy to make sure we stay connected to our community and colleagues. We will have clear boundaries for behaviour which are documented in straightforward terms and readily available to staff and the community. Security risks will be clearly communicated across services to enable team work and promote staff safety.

#### **Better, Best, Brilliant**

Security measures contribute to a safe, secure and supportive environment for everybody. We will continue to look for innovative ways to improve services and provide a positive experience for everyone.

Our responses to your questions are provided below. We have interpreted your reference to "members of the public" to be visitors to our DHB services. Assaults noted below are physical assaults.

#### **Total number of assaults against nurses by members of the public from 2013 – 2018**

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1	0	1	0	0	8

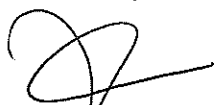
NB: Waitematā DHB population has increased by more than 50,000 people since 2013.

Waitematā DHB, like other agencies across the state sector, supports the open disclosure of information to assist the public's understanding of how we are delivering publicly-funded healthcare. This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released.

If you feel that there are good reasons why your response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

We hope this reply satisfies your request.

Yours sincerely



**Fiona McCarthy**  
Director Human Resources  
Waitematā District Health Board