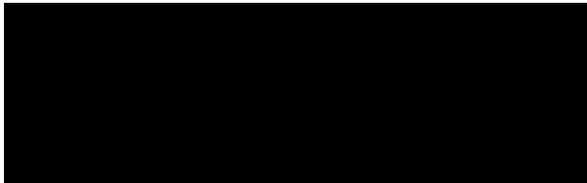


13 April 2022



Dear 

Re: OIA request – The number of critical health workers who have returned to work while COVID-19-positive

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 17 March seeking information from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) about the number of critical health workers who have returned to work while testing positive to COVID-19.

Before responding to your specific questions, it may be useful to provide some context about our services.

Waitematā is the largest and one of the most rapidly growing DHBs in the country, serving a population of around 650,000 across the North Shore, Waitakere and Rodney areas. We are the largest employer in the district, employing more than 8,900 people across more than 80 locations.

In addition to providing care to our own resident population, we are the Northern Region provider of forensic mental health services and child rehabilitation services, plus the metro Auckland provider of child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services.

In response to your request, we are able to provide the following information:

1. How many critical Waitematā DHB staff have been at work while still testing positive for COVID-19 since 8 March? And which departments they work in?

The number of critical health care workers who have returned to work at Waitematā DHB while COVID-19-positive has been extremely low. It should be noted that staff only return to work when they are asymptomatic and feeling well. Their decision to return to work is entirely voluntary and in agreement with their manager.

In addition, any COVID-19-positive staff who have returned to work do so in COVID-19-designated areas only. Arrangements are made to keep them separate from other staff, such as providing separate lunch rooms and work stations.

Since 8 March until the date your request was received on 17 March, the following critical health care workers returned to work in dedicated COVID-19 areas while COVID-19-positive:

- fewer than eight registered nurses have returned to work to COVID-19 wards at North Shore and Waitakere hospitals in this timeframe
- five resident doctors returned to work in COVID-19 wards at both hospitals.

2. What measures has the DHB got in place to limit the number of COVID-19 positive staff at work?

Waitematā DHB does not require staff who are COVID-19-positive to work.

This provision was used at a certain point in time, with a handful of staff who felt well enough to work and wished to return in order to assist on COVID-19 wards which were seeing increasing rates of hospitalisations due to the community outbreak of the Omicron variant.

At that time, the COVID-19 area/service decided whether the staff member had the skills it required and assessed its capacity to accommodate a COVID-19-positive staff member. Managers and senior clinical staff ensured the COVID-19-positive staff member could be separated from non-COVID-19-positive staff by using separate break areas and break times to other staff, prior to confirming any shifts.

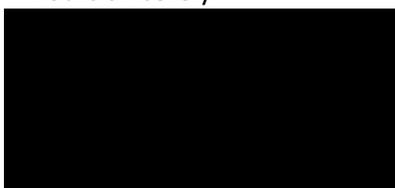
We have now returned to a more business-as-usual environment and this provision is no longer used. Current staff isolation periods vary, depending on where they work and the types of duties they perform.

I trust that this information is helpful.

Waitematā DHB supports the open disclosure of information to assist community 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 consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider your views.

Yours sincerely



**Executive Director Finance, People and Planning
Waitematā District Health Board**