

Email: tsdft.foirequests@nhs.net
Our Ref: TSD10613

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for Information

We are writing to confirm that we have now completed our search for the information you requested.

A copy of the information is below:

The Trust has confirmed that during April 2026 alone:

- **648 agency nurses worked weekend shifts.**
- **7,037 agency nursing hours were worked at weekends.**
- **Total expenditure on weekend agency nursing cover was £225,140.**
- **Agency charge rates ranged from £31.29 to £38.51 per hour.**

Given the substantial reliance on agency nursing staff, I would be grateful for clarification on the following points:

Further to your Freedom of Information request reference TSD10532, published on 19/05/2026, and your additional request reference TSD10613, our third-party agency staffing provider has identified an error in the initial response and has asked us to issue the following correction:

4. The total number of agency nurses engaged for weekend shifts, and the total number of hours worked.

- Initial response - Based on April 2026, 648 nurses worked weekend shifts, totalling 7,037 hours.
- Corrected response - 64 workers were engaged for weekend shifts, totalling 2,414.50 hours.

5. The total expenditure on agency nursing staff for weekend cover.

- Initial response - Based on April 2026, £225,140.
- Corrected response - £83,610.80 for April, including the Bank Holiday weekend.

We apologise for the error in our initial response. This was the result of human error, as all April 2026 shifts, including both weekday and weekend shifts, were included in the original figures.

Workforce Planning and Voluntary Redundancy

- 1) The Trust has previously undertaken voluntary redundancy programmes as part of workforce and financial management measures.**
 - a) Please explain:**
 - i) Whether any nursing, clinical support, or patient-facing posts were reduced through voluntary redundancy, voluntary severance, recruitment freezes, or non-replacement of vacancies during the period in which agency nurses were subsequently engaged.**
 - ii) What assessment was undertaken to determine whether retaining substantive staff would have represented better value for money than reducing permanent staffing levels and subsequently engaging agency workers.**
 - iii) Whether the Trust conducted any cost-benefit analysis comparing the costs of voluntary redundancy payments and subsequent agency expenditure.**
 - iv) Why agency nurses were required in such significant numbers if substantive staffing capacity had previously been reduced.**

Having considered the wording of this part of your request, the Trust can confirm that it does not hold recorded information relating to a completed voluntary redundancy programme of the type described.

The Trust has not previously undertaken a completed voluntary redundancy programme involving the reduction of nursing, clinical support, or patient-facing posts during the period relevant to the agency nursing information provided.

Whilst a voluntary redundancy process is currently being progressed; as that process has not yet concluded, there is no final recorded outcome, assessment, or completed cost-benefit analysis available to disclose in response to these questions at this time. Accordingly, for the purposes of the Act, the Trust does not hold the requested recorded information in relation to a completed programme. This response should not be interpreted as a refusal to answer future requests about the current programme once final information is held and recorded.

Use of Enhanced Rates for Existing Staff

- 2) Question 7 of my request sought policies, business cases, or documented rationale comparing agency usage against enhanced payments or incentives for substantive staff. The response provided states "N/A".**

- a) Please clarify whether:
- i) No such documents exist; or
 - ii) Such documents exist but were not identified within the scope of the search.
 - iii) If no documents exist, please confirm whether any formal assessment was undertaken before deciding to incur agency expenditure rather than offering enhanced rates, overtime incentives, retention payments, bank shifts, recruitment initiatives, or other measures to existing staff.

For Agenda for Change staff, overtime and unsocial hours provisions are set out in the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook, also known as the Agenda for Change Handbook. This national document, published by NHS Employers, is publicly available. The Trust's Temporary Staffing Policy is also available on the Trust's website, www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/uploads/temporary-staffing-policy-h32.pdf?last-updated=20220909.

As this information is reasonably accessible by other means, the Trust is not required to provide a copy under section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

In relation to medical staff, the Trust has identified and is disclosing the Consultant and SAS Additional Clinical Work Policy (MD2), which sets out the local policy position for additional clinical work undertaken by Consultant and SAS doctors. The Trust has not identified any further recorded policy, business case, or documented rationale within the scope of this question comparing agency nursing usage against enhanced payments, overtime incentives, retention payments, bank shifts, recruitment initiatives, or other measures offered to existing staff.

Frequency of Agency Usage

- 3) The response states "Based on April 2026, 242" in relation to frequency of agency nurse usage. Please clarify what the figure of 242 represents. For example:
- a) Number of shifts? 242
 - b) Number of occasions agency staff were booked? 242 (all requested shifts were filled)
 - c) Number of requests for agency cover? 242
 - d) Some other measure? Not applicable

Agency Staffing Controls

4) Please provide details of:

- a. Any executive approvals, expenditure controls, or governance arrangements required before agency nursing staff can be engaged.**
Nursing agency requests need to be approved by Associate Director of Nursing and Professional Practice (ADNPP)
- b. Whether the Trust has set agency reduction targets or workforce substitution plans.**
30% reduction target built into budgets
- c. The total agency nursing expenditure for the financial year to date, not limited to weekends.**
£487,000 for registered nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff

Financial and Patient Safety Considerations

5) Given the scale of agency utilisation identified, please confirm whether the Trust has undertaken any review, audit, risk assessment, or Board-level discussion concerning:

- a) The financial impact of agency dependency;**
- b) Workforce sustainability;**
- c) The relationship between vacancy levels and agency expenditure; and**
- d) Any risks to continuity of patient care arising from reliance on temporary staffing.**
- e) If such reports exist, please provide copies or relevant extracts.**

The Trust undertakes ongoing review and monitoring of agency utilisation through its established workforce, financial and clinical governance arrangements. These arrangements consider agency usage alongside workforce capacity, vacancy levels, recruitment activity, expenditure controls, and the need to maintain safe staffing and continuity of patient care.

In relation to the financial impact of agency dependency, the Trust can confirm that agency expenditure is reviewed as part of its Cost Improvement Programme and wider workforce planning processes. A targeted reduction in agency expenditure of approximately 30% has been incorporated into the workforce plan, with progress monitored through established governance routes. This provides the recorded basis for the Trust's position that agency reduction is being managed as part of wider financial recovery and workforce planning arrangements.

In relation to workforce sustainability, the Trust's position is that reducing reliance on temporary staffing is addressed through substantive recruitment, retention activity, workforce redesign and controls over agency use. Agency reduction targets are not treated in isolation; they are considered alongside safe staffing requirements, skill mix, service demand and the availability of substantive or bank staff.

In relation to the relationship between vacancy levels and agency expenditure, the Trust can confirm that these matters are monitored together. Vacancy data, recruitment activity, agency usage and agency spend are reviewed collectively to support targeted interventions and to ensure that temporary staffing is used where required to maintain services while substantive workforce plans are progressed.

In relation to patient safety and continuity of care, the Trust can confirm that agency use is subject to clinical governance and risk management oversight. The purpose of this oversight is to ensure that temporary staffing arrangements are used appropriately and that any risks associated with staffing capacity, continuity or skill mix are considered through the Trust's established governance framework.

The Trust can further confirm that agency usage and associated workforce metrics are reviewed through the fortnightly Workforce Programme Group, which considers agency usage, agency spend and related workforce indicators. To the extent that recorded information is held in the form of governance reporting, workforce planning information and financial monitoring information, this constitutes the Trust's response to this part of the request.

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including any non-commercial research you are doing and for the purposes of news reporting.

If you wish to discuss any of the above, please contact us, quoting the FOI reference number above.

If you are unhappy with the way in which we have handled your request, please contact the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Lead in the first instance. If you wish to make a formal complaint, you should write to our Complaints Manager at Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, First Floor Bowyer Building, Torbay Hospital, Torquay TQ2 7AA or by email to tsdft.feedback@nhs.net

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint or the internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Information Commissioner will only make a decision once you have exhausted the complaints and/or internal review process provided by us. The Information



Torbay and South Devon

NHS Foundation Trust

Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or through this link <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Team