

12th October 2020

[REDACTED]

Email [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act Request for – Covid-19 and staffing

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 10th September 2020, you requested the following information:

1. **How has Covid-19 affected staffing? In terms of staying home as if the slightest bit sick.**
2. **What was your rate of sick leave from March - September 2019 compared to the same period 2020?**
 - a) **How has the DHB managed this?**
3. **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.**
4. **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.**

Counties Manukau Health Response:

For context Counties Manukau Health (CM Health) employs over 7,500 staff and provides health and support services to people living in the Counties Manukau region (approx. 569,400 people). We see over 118,000 people in our Emergency Department each year, and over 2,000 visitors come through Middlemore Hospital daily.

Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient, ambulatory and community-based models of care. We provide regional and supra-regional specialist services i.e. for orthopaedics, plastics, burns and spinal services. There are also several specialist services provided including tertiary surgical services, medical services, mental health and addiction services.

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

Counties Manukau Health (CM Health) is managing staff sickness around Covid-19 in line with the current government guidelines; any staff member with Covid-19 symptoms as per the Ministry of Health website is advised to stay at home if they are unwell.
2. **What was your rate of sick leave from March - September 2019 compared to the same period 2020?**

Table 1 below identifies sick leave from March 2019 to September 2020. Please note September 2020 has not been included as the data was pulled before it was available for the full month.

CM Health Staff Sick Leave		
Month	2019	2020
March	3.2%	3.6%
April	2.8%	2.1%
May	3.6%	2.6%
June	3.6%	3.4%
July	3.7%	3.8%
August	3.6%	3.7%
September	3.5%	-

Table 1: Data Source Leader 25.09.2020

a) How has the DHB managed this?

Staff sickness is managed within the operational management of services as part of our daily service delivery at CM Health. Hospital occupancy and staff availability is reviewed daily. This has continued during Covid-19 and in addition we have increased our education around infection control practices which is given to staff through multiple channels.

3. 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. Figure 1 below reflects adult inpatient areas (Medical, Surgical and Adult Rehabilitation/ Health of Older People (ARHOP)) occupancy by month in Middlemore Hospital, from March 2019 – September 2020.

We have based the calculations on the total occupancy at 0700 hours divided by the maximum available physical beds open in these areas at 0700 hours, in this data we have also included the Emergency Department request rate at that time. Please note, there is variation from this average occupancy rate on an hourly, daily and seasonal basis, and for different clinical areas.

As you will be aware, Covid-19 National Alert levels were put in place from 25th March 2020 onwards.

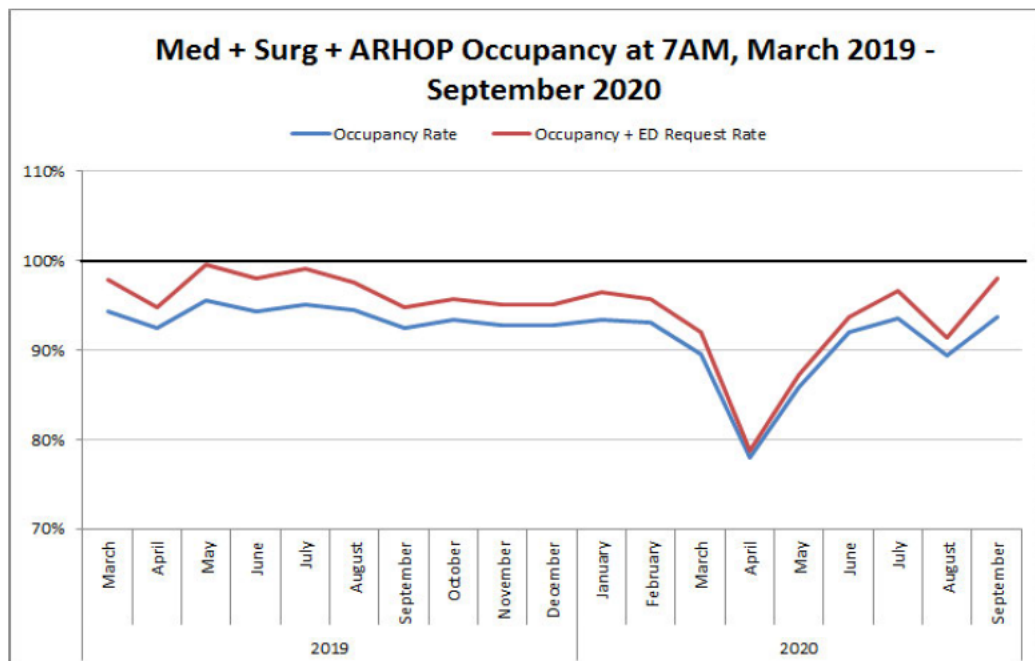


Figure 1: Data Source MMCIS 08.10.2020

4. 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.

CM Health's Covid-19 response has not required an activation of an escalation plan related to staff sick leave. There is already in existence (pre-Covid-19) escalation plans to manage situations if there is high occupancy and a high level of staff leave. Adults are not placed in wards where children are admitted.

I trust that this information is helpful. 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 may be published on the Counties Manukau Health website. If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

Yours sincerely



**Fepulea'i Margie Apa
Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health**