

## CORPORATE OFFICE

Level 2, H Block  
The Princess Margaret Hospital  
Cashmere Road  
**CHRISTCHURCH**

Telephone: 0064 3 364 4160  
Fax: 0064 3 364 4101  
[carolyn.gullery@cdhb.health.nz](mailto:carolyn.gullery@cdhb.health.nz)

22 April 2016

Charlie Greenhalgh

Email: [fyi-request-3797-3577dc02@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-3797-3577dc02@requests.fyi.org.nz);

Dear Ms Greenhalgh

### Official Information Act request CDHB 9340

We refer to your email dated 22 March 2016 requesting the following information under section 12 of the Official Information Act 1982.

- I would like to know the figures around assault of staff members while working at the Canterbury District Health Board, both physically and any reports of verbal abuse. I would like figures from over the last year and any previous years to see if there has been an increase, especially since the earthquakes. Any particulars such as whether they were punched, scratched, spat at etc would be helpful if this information is available.

### Verbal Abuse and Physical Assault Incidents Reported by Canterbury District Health Board Staff Table One:

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Verbal abuse	347	262	403	459	287
Physical assault	880	1,411	1,089	1,052	383

**Note:** The data in Table One indicates a significant drop in reported staff incidents between 2014 and 2015.

There are a number of possible contributing factors to this sudden reduction including:

- The discharge of patients responsible for a significant number of physical assaults on staff.
- The targeted focus of the Safe Staff Committee on reducing patient assaults on staff.
- A change to the reporting system for assault and abuse, combined with a transition period of staff familiarity with the new system.

Staff may also encounter abuse as a consequence of a patient's complex mental health status, particularly in the SMHS forensic service where patients have a higher risk profile related to violent offending in the context of their mental illness.

All staff adhere to Canterbury District Health Board [CDHB] policies on Health, Safety and Incident Management (**Appendix 1 and 2** attached) when dealing with abuse from patients and visitors. Staff are encouraged to report any verbal or physical incidents promptly, which are then investigated and appropriate recommendations are implemented.

We do not record incidents by severity as this would be too subjective because what one person considers minor might have a more serious impact on another. We are therefore unable to provide details such as whether staff were punched, scratched, spat at or kicked.

With all incidents staff are entitled to make a complaint with the police. Our '**Complaint to Police (Staff Complaint) policy**' (**Appendix 3** attached) outlines the process for a staff member who wishes to lay a complaint with police, following an incident for example, an assault.

The Canterbury DHB is committed to the wellbeing and safety of staff and patients within our hospitals and facilities.

I trust that this satisfies your interest in this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carolyn Gullery', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Carolyn Gullery  
**General Manager,**  
**Planning, Funding & Decision Support**