

16 March 2026

Registered Nurses Band 5 and Above on Long-Term Sickness Leave

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 regarding the number of registered nurses on long-term sick leave. Please provide the following information, using the most recent data available, as well as the same information for the equivalent, or nearest, date in 2021 and 2016. If possible, please confirm the date at which each dataset was accurate.

- 1. The total number (head count) of all registered nurses employed by the trust or health board at Agenda for Change Band 5 and above [e.g. 02/02/2026 - 1,506; 02/02/2021 - 1,321; 02/02/2016 - 1,234]**

The figures below relate to Registered Nurses at Agenda for Change (AFC) Band 5 and above who were employed by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust on the following snapshot dates:

31 January 2016: 9,779 Registered Nurses (AFC Band 5 and above)
31 January 2021: 10,195 Registered Nurses (AFC Band 5 and above)
31 January 2026: 11,064 Registered Nurses (AFC Band 5 and above)

- 2. Of these registered nurses (Band 5 and above), how many are/were absent from work on long-term sick leave, which is defined as sickness absence lasting more than 28 consecutive calendar days [e.g. 02/02/2026 - 30; 02/02/2021 - 12; 02/02/2016 - 25]**

In line with the request, the reported sickness absence figures cover Registered Nurses (AFC Band 5 and above) who were absent for 28 calendar days or more as at the same snapshot dates listed above.

The data includes employees who held a permanent or temporary contract with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust at the time.

The figures exclude individuals engaged on Bank contracts.

31 January 2016: 290 Registered Nurses (AFC Band 5 and above)
31 January 2021: 348 Registered Nurses (AFC Band 5 and above)
31 January 2026: 379 Registered Nurses (AFC Band 5 and above)