

Ref: FOI/3831

9 May 2022

Dr Minh Alexander  
c/o [minhalexander@aol.com](mailto:minhalexander@aol.com)

**Ambulance Service Headquarters**  
Waterfront Business Park  
Brierley Hill  
West Midlands  
DY5 1LX  
Tel: 01384 215555  
website: [www.wmas.nhs.uk](http://www.wmas.nhs.uk)

Dear Dr Minh Alexander,

**REQUEST UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000**

Further to your enquiry, which we received on 7 April 2022. Please see our response below in relation to the information you have requested:

**With respect to this report to local media in November 2021 about eight staff suicides of WMAS staff in the preceding four years:**

<https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.birminghammail.co.uk%2Fnews%2Fmidlands-news%2Fambulance-999-crisis-saw-dementia-22200123&data=04%7C01%7CMB-FOIMailbox%40wmas.nhs.uk%7C9e2f9f9a6b1048c0faf008da188fc4a8%7C32522f325eb74973bbc25033d71ac83f%7C0%7C0%7C637849302999547640%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=6ZGjAO8gZiuq9nMs5HZt9ZSE5sy2XiFPenZUcxffqUQ%3D&reserved=0>

in the context of the publicised deaths and suicides at East of England Ambulance Service.

Please can the trust advise:

- To the trust's knowledge, have there been any staff suicides in the last five years, and if so, please advise how many.
- To the trust's knowledge, have there been any sudden, unexplained staff deaths in the last five years. If so, please advise how many.
- To the trust's knowledge, have there been any attempted staff suicides in the last five years. If so, please advise how many.
- If there have been staff suicides, or attempted suicides, what steps the trust has taken to review any links between these events and the trust working environment and conditions.

Please advise of any lessons learnt and actions arising. Please disclose any review reports, other relevant governance documentation or equivalent in relation to these events or the Safeguarding of staff mental health and safety.

Sadly, as a Trust we have lost colleagues to suicide. The grief from their deaths has been felt, and continues to be felt, acutely by their friends and colleagues within the organisation. Our thoughts remain with their family and friends at home.

Year of recording	Number of colleagues who died by suicide
2015	0
2016	1
2017	0
2018	3
2019	3
2020	0
2021	2

Much learning has been taken from the deaths of our colleagues, mental health awareness training and additional support services have been embedded directly as a result. We recognise there is more to be done and we are determined to do what is necessary to support the mental and emotional health of our workforce. From recruitment to retirement, we proactively encourage staff to be open about their mental health. Mental health awareness and a focus on protecting and maintaining health, is fundamental for Emergency Service personnel. The Board of Directors, our managers, internal and external workforce wellbeing services, union representatives and peer to peer staff support networks are committed to working together to keep mental wellbeing a priority.

As a result of the ongoing work in this area, our staff are increasingly candid with us about their mental health needs. We recognise that the more we listen to the needs of the individuals who make up our workforce, the better we can support them to stay well at work, and beyond. Our multiple staff support provisions provide our workforce with expert mental health information, self-care advice, and as needed, supported access to psychological therapies and NHS Mental Health Services. Confidential listening and peer support services are available to all staff 24/7. To further break down stigma, openly making full use of the wellbeing provisions is strongly encouraged but staff also have the option to access many of the support provisions anonymously, should they prefer.

Monitoring the health of our workforce is a key component in tailoring our wellbeing support offerings. While we recognise your request for a numerical figure on how many of our staff have taken steps towards ending their lives, this is a complex and nuanced area. In our capacity as an employer, excluding acute safeguarding concerns, we would not be notified by other NHS healthcare organisations if our staff access their mental health services, nor would we be notified if staff access medical care outside of West Midlands Ambulance Service to treat self-harm injuries. While staff are strongly encouraged to be candid with their line managers, HR and occupational support services, staff can of course elect not to discuss the intimate details of their mental health needs and/or personal reasons for feeling distressed. There will also be some staff who sadly do not make it known to anyone at work that they are thinking about, or have previously come close to, ending their life. Accordingly, it is not possible to provide a figure on how many staff have taken steps to die by suicide, but the outcome has not been fatal.

We continue to work hard to help our workforce to stay well, to be open, to break down stigma and barriers to accessing support, and to make sure that they have multiple reliable and robust pathways to the right help at the right time for them; anonymously or not. WMAS does not have full access to its staffs' sensitive and confidential medical information without their consent. With so many variables and gaps in information outside of our reach, any figure would be arbitrary as there would be so many occasions it did not capture the data.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you have the right to appeal in line with guidance from the Information Commissioner:

In the first instance you may write to the Chief Executive Officer of this Trust

- Anthony Marsh  
Regional Headquarters  
Millennium Point  
Waterfront Way  
Brierley Hill  
West Midlands  
DY5 1LX  
Tel: 01384 215555

The Chief Executive Officer will then appoint a nominated deputy to oversee and respond to the appeal with their approval.

Should you disagree with the contents of this letter you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

- Information Commissioner's Office,  
Wycliffe House,  
Water Lane,  
Wilmslow,  
Cheshire.  
SK9 5AF  
Tel: 0303 123 1113  
[www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

If you require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

**Aimee Dicken**  
**Freedom of Information Officer**