

03/01/2020

**Deputy James Browne,  
Dail Eireann  
Dublin 2.**

PQ Number: 53487/19

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the spend on agency staff for mental health services in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the original estimate for expenditure for mental health agency staff in each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -James Browne

Dear Deputy Browne,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position:

HSE Agency Staff Costs for Mental Health Division for the Period 2014 to Nov 19							
HSE Mental Health Division	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	YTD Nov 19	
	€000s	€000s	€000s	€000s	€000s	€000s	
Actual	26,819	33,992	43,141	52,981	58,130	54,928	
Approved Allocation	3,876	14,603	15,886	31,059	39,368	40,395	

Agency in Mental Health can be split into 3 distinct categories:

- Nursing/Support agency required to replace the high levels of leavers in MH services, mainly in Acute units. Agency is required to keep rostering levels at safe levels.
- Nursing/Support agency relating to "specialising" arrangements which has increased greatly over the last 4 years.
- Medical Agency which predominately relates to Medical Consultants in Community teams which are more difficult posts to fill than Consultant posts in Acute units.

The Agency costs experienced in Mental Health relate to the requirement to fulfil rostered staffing levels in MH in-patient units and to respond to complex and challenging behaviour through specials which cannot be filled through permanent staff. The regulatory environment and best practice standards mean that this staffing is essential.

Agency costs are also incurred to fill essential medical posts through locum/agency arrangements which Mental Health are unable to appoint on a permanent basis due to the international labour market. Even with efforts towards permanent appointments it is apparent that there are a cohort of staff who wish to work through agencies where they can choose when and where they work.



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

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I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Sinead Reynolds  
General Manager Mental Health Services