



12 January 2021

Deputy David Cullinane
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ 41186/20 To ask the Minister for Health the targets for interview for the dedicated contact tracing workforce identified in the winter plan on a weekly and monthly basis for the period 1 June to 1 December 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ 41187/20 To ask the Minister for Health the number of interviews on a weekly basis for the period 1 June 2020 to 1 December 2020 for the dedicated contact tracing workforce identified in the winter plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ 41188/20 To ask the Minister for Health the total targeted interviews by 1 December 2020 and actual interviews conducted by 1 December 2020 for the dedicated contact tracing workforce identified in the winter plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter

PQ 41189/20 To ask the Minister for Health the number of candidates who applied to work in the dedicated contact tracing workforce identified in the winter plan by 1 December 2020; the minimum educational qualification of candidate who progressed to interview; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Questions which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response. I wish to apologise for the delay in issuing a response to the above.

Due to the current demands of the Covid-19 pandemic and the numerous queries we have received to date it has taken longer than I would have liked to respond. As a number of these questions overlap I have outlined our response in one correspondence.

Contact Tracers are employed to work in two distinct areas within the HSE, as part of the Public Health teams and as part of a national network of Contact Tracing Centres. The HSE's Contact Tracing Centres are located in Dublin, Limerick, Galway and Cork. During the early stages of the pandemic, Contact Tracing services were being provided by a blend of redeployed HSE staff, Army resources, redeployed Civil and Public servant resources such as Third Level Educational sector and Government Departments including Revenue.

The HSE commenced working with a third party supplier for Contact Tracing resources during the course of Q3, 2020 with interviews commencing in September 2020. Due to the upsurge in COVID-19 and the need for temporarily re-assigned HSE staff to return to their service roles, the HSE was tasked with the immediate recruitment of Contact Tracers for its national network of Contact Tracing Centres.

In order to fill these roles in the fastest possible timeframe, the HSE continues to work in partnership with a 3rd party supplier (CPL Healthcare) to expedite recruitment for Contact Tracers. Using the 3rd party supplier was a key enabler in providing a responsive resourcing solution to build the Contact Tracing capacity. In order to expedite the recruitment process and maximise recruitment

appointments, Contact Tracers hired through this process are employees of the agency. All Contact Tracers are employed on 11 month, specified purpose contracts and are contracted to work 37 hours per week or on a part-time basis as agreed.

We are targeting to recruit and on-board up to 800 (WTE) contact tracing staff. From the 25th August through December 1st a total of 1200 interviews have taken place. From the 9th August through December 21st a total of, 1313 interviews had taken place.

The number of interviews on a weekly basis for the period 25th September 2020 to 1 December 2020 is below:

Week Of	25/09	02/10	09/10	16/10	23/10	30/10	06/11	13/11
Total	316	245	56	92	118	58	59	66
Week Of	20/11	27/11	04/12	11/12	18/12	25/12		
Total	53	90	47	100	5	8		

In terms of managing the interviewing process, CPL prioritises applications dependent on the greatest staffing need per the individual Contact Tracing Centres. This simply means that if for example a Contact Tracing Centre in Dublin needs more staff in a particular week, the candidates for that centre are prioritised as regards contact, interview and follow up i.e. the objective of the CPL Healthcare interview process is to interview enough candidates to fill the job vacancies identified by the HSE.

On 1st December 2020, there were 3,199 applications received for the recruitment campaign.

The key skills required for the role of contact tracing are:

- Enhanced communication skills and telephone manner;
- Ability to compassionately empathise with the patient’s experience;
- Ability to remain calm while under pressure;
- Ability and willingness to work autonomously with minimal supervision;
- Attention to detail and commitment to maintaining the confidentiality required;
- An ability to input data in the HSE’s Contact Tracing software (training provided); and
- Clinical experience is not necessary and full training is provided.

In terms of a minimum educational qualification for contact tracers, applicants must have the Leaving Certificate or equivalent.

I trust this addresses your questions.

Yours sincerely,

Niamh O’Beirne

Niamh O’Beirne
National Lead Testing and Tracing