



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta, Acmhainní Daonna
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Ospidéal Dr. Steevens'
Baile Átha Cliath 8

Office of the National Director of Human Resources
Health Service Executive
Dr. Steevens' Hospital
Dublin 8
D08 W2A8

Teil/Tel: (01) 635 2319
Rphost/ E-mail: nationalhr@hse.ie

Pauline Tully, T.D.

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PQ 13946 20: To ask the Minister for Health the full facts regarding the Be on Call for Ireland campaign launched by the HSE; the number of trained healthcare professionals that responded across each discipline; the number that actually returned home; the locations they were deployed to; the number across each of those disciplines that remain in service; the number in each discipline that have been and will be retained and permanently employed in the health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Pauline Tully

Dear Deputy,

I refer to your recent PQ which was forwarded to the HSE for response.

With regards to your specific questions:

1. To ask the Minister for Health the full facts regarding the Be on Call for Ireland campaign that was launched by the HSE:

From mid February 2020 the HSE began to make preparations to increase significantly the capacity within the health services in anticipation of this potential unprecedented demand for Health services.

From a staffing perspective this included a number of strategies inclusive of exploiting all existing recruitment pools, maximising agency staff, rehiring of recently retired clinicians, increasing hours of part time staff, encouraging staff to return from career breaks and the postponement of annual leave. There was significant recruitment across the HSE during the period of Covid-19, with over 4,200 posts filled through HBS (Shared Services for the HSE)- a further 900 candidates will be in post over the next number of weeks. Further recruitment has been undertaken at local Community Healthcare Organisation and Hospital levels. These staff are employed on the HSE payroll.

A further project was developed to harness any additional healthcare staff who could support the health services during the pandemic. This was the 'Be on Call for Ireland' project.

The 'Be on Call for Ireland' initiative was launched on St Patrick's Day. The main priority of this project was to provide "job ready" health care professionals to the health services in the event of the anticipated increase in hospital beds and community service staffing requirements. It should be noted that at that time Ireland was potentially facing a similar situation to that of the health services in Spain and Italy. At the time of project launch, the widest possible cohort of potential applicants was given an opportunity to apply to meet the potentially unprecedented service and social care demands. This included volunteers, however as the programme developed and in tandem with

community initiatives volunteers were directed to developing community based initiatives that may have a priority need of their skills sets.

At that time of the 'Be on Call for Ireland' recruitment campaign, the health services needed to harness the potential for the most flexible work force in health. As the virus progressed through the population, it began to be understood the impact the disease was having on the health service and what staff were potentially needed at any time. Significant numbers who applied for the 'Be on Call for Ireland' did not have experience in healthcare, however, in a time of national crisis it was heartening for the general public and indeed the health services to see the level of good will towards supporting the health and social care sectors. The focus of the 'Be on Call for Ireland' recruitment campaign progressed from being a general call for support to that of focus on the recruitment of experienced and qualified personnel who could provide direct patient care or support the provision of that care in our Hospitals and Community Services. The vast majority of service need was in front line and direct care services.

It was most heartening to the HSE that the number of applications for the 'Be on Ireland on Call' initiative was approximately 73,000, however over 44,000 of the applications were either administrative/support/volunteers. Fortunately the management and administration requirements were met through redeployment both across the health services but also across the broader civil and public service. It was important that the HSE targeted its efforts to provide health services and therefore many of the essential support (non- health care) services were provided through Volunteer Ireland and other well established networks such as the GAA. The 15,000 volunteer applicants were redirected towards Volunteer Ireland.

When examining the remaining applicant pool of 29,000 it was essential that the HSE took a broad view of the health services and did not in any way destabilise existing services by depleting other parts of the services i.e. private hospitals, voluntary organisation or private nursing homes.

Of this number it was established over 10,000 were already working in the health services. 1,000 were not registered with the relevant body and therefore could not work. A further 3,000 were undergraduates and over 1,000 withdrew. This left a residual number of approximately 14,500.

To this end the ‘Be on Call for Ireland’ initiative only targeted qualified health care workers who were not currently providing health services. Extensive online and telephone interviews took place to determine relevant candidates’ availability to work and to determine that candidates were suitably qualified or experienced. The number of candidates of candidates who indicated they were available to work and had the relevant experience needed by the services at that time was approximately 2000. The ‘Be on Call’ recruitment campaign particularly focused on these 2,000 candidates, in line with service needs in particular locations.

As of 15th July 2020, 197 health and social care appointees have been deployed from the “Be on Call for Ireland” initiative to HSE services in both community, acute and public health departments. An additional 726 candidates have full recruitment clearances in place and are “job ready” as per service need. 911 candidates are in the clearance process.

2. With regards to the question- the number of trained healthcare professionals that responded across each discipline;

The ‘Be on Call for Ireland’ online platform was designed and delivered within a very short period of time in response to the rapidly deteriorating global pandemic. The online application form captured key data from applicants including applicants self- identifying as a particular discipline or skill set. Applicants in the key groups (e.g. nursing, health care support staff, doctors) were furthermore invited to complete online screening to ascertain their professional registration status, the recency of their healthcare experience (if any), their capacity to work in direct care/ front line services. This online screening took place on various applicant pools as service needs arose.

It is important to note that high volume of applicants registered with “Be on Call” who were already working in healthcare, had no further availability to work especially with regards to childcare/ other caring responsibilities, were not available to take direct care roles. This significantly reduced the qualified, experienced and available applicant pools in key disciplines. This is further outlined in the answer to question 1 above.

The figures below relate to the overall applications for self-declared profession/ experience of the applicants when they registered for the “Be on Call” initiative:

Static Overview of Registrations for Be on Call for Ireland (Figures Rounded)		
Discipline	Registrations	Comment
Nursing/Midwifery*	6,500	Of which 1,700+ Nursing/ Midwifery Undergraduates processed as Healthcare Assistants or Pre -Reg Nurses under separate initiatives
Medical/Dental	4,000	Of which 1,300+ Undergraduate Doctors processed under local and intern initiatives.
Health & Social Care Professional	9,000	Majority of Health & Social Care Professionals recruitment needs met through use of existing HSE recruitment panels
Ambulance	300	Ambulance recruitment needs met through existing HSE panels
Support Staff, Patient & Client Care	9,000	Majority of Support Staff needs met through Nursing/Midwifery Undergraduates / Healthcare Assistant initiative.
Management Admin	13,000	Management/ Admin requirements met through Public / Civil Service Re-deployment Scheme
Volunteer	15,000	Volunteer needs met through the Government Volunteer Scheme and through local volunteer networks
Other useful skill area	16,000	Majority of registrations in this category not relevant to healthcare requirements

No work area / profession identified by applicant	500	No work area / profession identified by applicant
Total*	73,300	*Of which 12,000 identified as already working in healthcare

3. With regards to the question- the number that actually returned home;

The “Be on Call for Ireland” initiative did not capture if applicants originated from overseas and therefore are unable to report on this criteria.

4. With regards to the questions- the locations they were deployed to; the number across each of those disciplines that remain in service;

As of 15-07-20, the breakdown of assignment for each CHO, Hospital Group and HSE service and the number that remain in service is as follows:

Candidates Appointed by "Be on Call for Ireland" initiative as of 15-07-20		
Detail CHO/ HGs/ Service	Appointments	Applicants who remain in role
CHO1	5	3
CHO2	5	5
CHO3	6	4
CHO4	3	2
CHO5	8	7
CHO6	0	0
CHO7	5	2
CHO8	6	6
CHO9	5	4
Saolta	17	17
IEHG	15	13
DMHG	15	14
SSWHG	10	8
ULHG	44	42
RCSI	5	4
Citywest Isolation Unit	6	2
Contact Tracing Centre/ Chief Clinical Office	10	5
Departments of Public Health throughout HSE	10	8
Health Protection Surveillance Centre	12	12
Sero-prevalence Study	10	0
Total	197	158

5. With regards to the questions- the number in each discipline that have been and will be retained and permanently employed in the health service;

The table above details the numbers that have been retained in service to date. The aim of the “Be on Call” initiative was to harness work force potential in order to support the health service during the pandemic, in line with service need. Candidates were employed on short term employment

contracts and contracts are renewed in line with service need. During the pandemic, the service need was for direct care in hospital and community healthcare organisations, in public health and health surveillance and in short term Covid-19 related projects such as Sero-prevalence Project. "Be on Call" candidates have since left roles due to personal reasons, returned to their original jobs or the work need ceased. There continues to be a need across HSE services for staff in longer term roles (permanent and temporary) and these are advertised on www.hse.ie

I hope this has provided you with the information you have requested and if you require any further information or clarification please do contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marie O'Sullivan". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of a horizontal line that spans the width of the signature area.

HSE National HR