



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Stiúrtóra Náisiúnta, Acmhainní Daonna  
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
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**PQ 10168/20:** To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons that applied to be part of the Be on Call for Ireland initiative; the number that were subsequently recruited into the health service via the scheme; the amount paid to agency companies in respect of the scheme by company and amount in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Matt Carthy

Dear Deputy,

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.

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.

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.

To date 174 applicants have been appointed under this initiative and 650 applicants are now a "Job Ready" and available for employment when they are required.

In relation the costs for this project ,analysis of the costing element is ongoing presently.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marie O'Sullivan".

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National HR