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4<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Deputy Jennifer Whitmore,  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ Ref 6958/20 To ask the Minister for Health the number of contacts traced to date in the test and trace strategy for Covid-19; the number of contacts traced on average each day; the number of staff involved in contact tracing; the number of volunteers that came forward; the number deployed; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Whitmore,

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.

Contact tracing is a primary response to the management of all infectious diseases. Contact tracing happens in Public Health Departments, Infection Prevention and Control Teams, through Occupational Health Departments and in the context of Covid-19 pandemic, through recently established contact tracing centres.

For the Covid-19 virus, contact tracing involves a three step process. Step 1, referred to as Call 1, involves calling the person who was tested, and advising them of their positive test result. It also involves checking their health status, and providing the appropriate public health advice, regarding self-isolation. Call 1 is carried out by a clinical person.

The second step, call 2, involves ringing the person with the confirmed diagnosis back, and asking them to identify and provide contact numbers for anyone they were in close contact with (less than 2 metres apart for 15 minutes) from 48 hours before the onset of their symptoms. The final step, Call 3, involves calling all the contacts identified in the Call 2, advising them that they have been in contact with a confirmed case, providing them with the appropriate public health advice and requesting that they restrict their movements.

The Contact Tracing Centres were established to support Public Health Departments to manage the volume of cases from the Covid-19 outbreak. The CTCs were designed and deployed with the capacity

to deal with high volume, low complexity cases, with the high complexity cases dealt with by public health specialists. The HSE's model for contact tracing was based on training redeployed civil and public servants.

In this context the HSE trained over 1,700 civil and public servants in the process of contact tracing. As set out above, the three step call process requires a clinical person to do call 1, with non-clinical people doing calls 2 and 3. The majority of people who were trained initially were non-clinical, with the HSE then engaging with the Institutes of Higher Education, who provided a significant number of clinical people to support the process.

As the expected surge of confirmed cases never reached the anticipated levels, the HSE did not need to ultimately deploy as many people as it had trained. In total approximately 800 people were deployed and rostered over a seven day period, working between 9am and up to 8pm in the evening. The number of people deployed to CTCs is reviewed and adjusted by the HSE dependent on the number of confirmed cases.

In relation to your query regarding the number of contacts traced, the Covid Care Tracker system has a record of most of the confirmed cases, and contact tracing since its introduction in the middle of March. However it should be noted that contact tracing takes place in a number of functions in the HSE depending on the circumstances applicable to each positive case identified, for example Public Health Departments, Occupational Health Departments, Infection Prevention and Control Teams and through the recently established Contact Tracing Centres and as such not all contact tracing activity is recorded on the system.

Set out below is the total number of people called per week at Call 1 and Call 3 stage as recorded by the Covid Care Tracker. These weekly data collection exercises commenced the week ending the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

***Data Re Week Ending 18<sup>th</sup> April 2020***

- Total Call 1s made – **5,250** (average of 750 per day)
- Total Call 3s made – **7,616** (average of 1,088 per day)
- Average number of contact tracers per day – **210**

***Data Re Week Ending 25<sup>th</sup> April 2020***

- Total call 1s made – **2,641** (Average of 377 per day)
- Total call 3s made – **2,863** (Average of 409 per day)
- Average number of contact tracers per day – **76**

**Data Re Week Ending 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2020**

- Total call 1s made – **2,684** (Average of 383 per day)
- Total call 3s made – **2,336** (Average of 334 per day)
- Average number of contact tracers per day – **70**

**Data Re Week Ending 9<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

- Total call 1s made – **2,047** (Average of **292** per day)
- Total call 3s made – **2,503** (Average of **358** per day)
- Average number of contact tracers per day – **81**

**Data Re Week Ending 16<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

- Total call 1s made – **1,841** (Average of **263** per day)
- Total call 3s made – **2,869** (Average of **410** per day)
- Average number of contact tracers per day – **62**

**Data Re Week Ending 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020**

- Total call 1s made – **916** (Average of **131** per day)
- Total call 3s made – **1,803** (Average of **258** per day)
- Average number of contact tracers per day – **50**

**Data Re Week Ending 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

- Total call 1s made – **722** (Average of **103** per day)
- Total call 3s made – **1,168** (Average of **167** per day)
- Average number of contact tracers per day – **42**

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



**Mary-Jo Biggs**  
General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme