

30th November 2020

Deputy Catherine Connelly
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 32347/20 Question: “To ask the Minister for Health if consideration has been given to using the field interviewers for contact tracing in the battle against Covid-19 given their unique training and interview skills”.

Dear Deputy Connelly,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question 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 your above question.

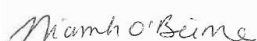
Due to the current demands of the Covid-19 pandemic and the numerous queries we have received to date it has taken longer than I would've liked to respond.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) field interviewers work during census time and as far as we are aware are seasonal workers within the CSO who are employed on a short term basis during the census cycle. In that respect they were not considered but we would welcome any field interviewers to apply for the newly dedicated posts in Contact Tracing.

The future service model for testing and tracing has been designed and implementation is well underway for priority areas such as workforce recruitment, the test centre estate and technology improvements. This service model will aim to deliver a patient-centred service, accessible, consistent and be flexible to demand. This plan includes the recruitment of a dedicated workforce in addition to leveraging the clinical and operational expertise embedded in our community services and this work has already commenced. Currently we have 652 newly recruited and appointed staff in contact tracing. The HSE is building a contact tracing workforce of 800 with c. 90 further contact tracers expected to be on-boarded this week. The operating model will take into account the evolving needs and future potential service demands in the context of Covid19 surges in disease transmission.

I trust this addresses your question.

Yours sincerely,



Niamh O'Beirne
National Lead Testing and Tracing