



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Airgeadais
Feidhmeannacht na
Seirbhíse Sláinte
Seomra 125, Ospidéal
Dr. Steevens
BÁC 8

Office of the Chief Financial Officer
Health Service Executive
Room 125, Dr Steevens
Hospital
Dublin 8

1st December 2020

Deputy David Cullinane TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Re PQ 36778 20: To ask the Minister for Health the agency spending per quarter in each of the years 2017 to 2019 and to date in 2020, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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. Your PQ above has been referred to me for response.

Please see the table below which shows the HSE Agency Staff costs for statutory services within the HSE by quarter for the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and for the period January to September 2020.

HSE Agency costs by quarter for the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and January to September 2020					
HSE Statutory Services Only					
Year	Q1 €'000	Q2 €'000	Q3 €'000	Q4 €'000	Total €'000
2017	71,392	75,139	78,394	75,111	300,035
2018	77,819	78,804	85,199	88,644	330,465
2019	84,474	84,478	88,943	91,131	349,027
*YTD Sept 2020	89,917	93,183	95,591	n/a	278,691

Source: HSE Consolidated Financial Intelligence System (CFI)
**Note: Please note 2020 figures are draft, unaudited and are subject to change*
Note: Please note in view of the fact that there are still currently numerous ledger systems in operation in the HSE some differences in coding may arise.

The data was sourced from the HSE Consolidated Financial Intelligence system and is for HSE Statutory services only. Please note that the 2020 data is draft only and is subject to change within the year end audit process. Please note in view of the fact that there are still currently numerous ledger systems in operation in the HSE some differences in coding may arise.

In 2020 the HSE have sourced additional agency staff primarily to support the expansion of the workforce in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and also to support service delivery and COVID-19 response due to increased staff absence due to COVID-19. Due to the immediate nature of the unprecedented emergency, coupled with the additional strain already being felt by the HSE recruitment services, it was necessary to engage outside agencies to assist in this work.

Agency expenditure is under constant review and the reduction and control of agency costs continues to be a particular focus for the Health Service. The effective management of variable pay costs forms a major element of operational cost-containment plans and is subject to continuous review at the performance meetings held under the performance and accountability framework. However, it is important to note that in addition to the specific critical response to the Covid 19 pandemic there are a variety of reasons driving agency demand. These include, but are not limited to the replacement of short term illness, maternity leave and challenges to recruiting and retaining Clinical health professionals whereby the balance between high cost and high risk to service quality and safety is struck through agency and overtime use to provide/maintain necessary services.

The HSE is committed to minimizing the use of Agency staff but recruitment and retention of Clinical, Nursing and other key staff is a constant challenge and impacts adversely on our ability to maintain safe and effective services. Agency staffing is also used to allow for flexible services designed to meet specific Service User needs, variation in activity and as required where there is a short term critical service need. Agency expenditure is under constant review and where possible is replaced by HSE staff.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at sarah.anderson1@hse.ie or tel: 087 9423319.

Yours sincerely



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