

20th October 2020

Thomas Gould, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref no. 28344/20

"To ask the Minister for Health the number of staff in counties Cork and Kerry that have been redeployed to testing and tracing; and the locations in which staff have been redeployed from in tabular form."

PQ ref no. 28345/20

"To ask the Minister for Health the status of the recruitment process for 60 new staff to be assigned to testing and tracing in counties Cork and Kerry; and the way in which the figure of 60 was deemed to be sufficient."

PQ ref no. 28346/20

"To ask the Minister for Health when the staff that have been redeployed to testing and tracing in Cork will be returned to their original posts."

Dear Deputy Gould,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

As part of its response to the Covid 19 pandemic, the HSE developed at very short notice a robust testing and tracing infrastructure. In order to ensure that these centres were adequately staffed and to meet the demand presenting, we would have taken the decision to temporarily re-deploy some staff from their existing healthcare services to provide additional support to the testing and tracing services. In addition to HSE staff, the Defence Forces, local authorities and a number of our voluntary partners have also provided personnel to Testing and Contact Tracing.

The HSE is currently actively recruiting so that staff who have been temporarily seconded to swabbing centres and contact tracing centres can return to their permanent roles. The balance of a return to service continuity in terms of ensuring core HSE services are delivered alongside the delivery and maintenance of our COVID specific services is a priority. A number of successful candidates from the current recruitment campaign have already commenced in contact tracing and community swabber posts within Cork and Kerry. This has allowed us to increase the number of staff working at community test centres in order to facilitate longer opening times and additional testing bays to meet increased demand for community testing. This recruitment is being managed by National Team and I understand there is approximately 50% of the recruitment achieved to date – the number assigned to each satellite hub was developed as part of the overall national model and I understand this will be for a minimum of 12 months.

As the numbers of new staff coming on board increases, it will also allow redeployed return to their core roles. Within Cork Kerry Community Healthcare we will see the first cohort of staff redeployed back to their core roles on the week commencing 2nd November 2020. This will continue on a rolling prioritised basis thereafter.


The future service model for testing and tracing is in the final stages of design with implementation underway for priority areas such as workforce recruitment and the test centre estate. This service model will aim to deliver a patient-centred service, accessible, consistent and flexible service. This plan includes the recruitment of a permanent workforce in addition to leveraging the clinical and operational expertise embedded in our community services and this work has already commenced. The operating model will take into account the evolving needs and future potential service demands in the context of Covid19 surges in disease transmission.

Details of staff redeployed during the covid pandemic are outlined below for your information:

County	Service Area	WTE
Cork	Nursing	14.38
	Occupational Therapy Services	7.2
	Speech & Language Therapy Services	11.7
	Dental Services	15
	Physiotherapy Services	8.6
	Support Staff	8.95
	Psychology Services	1
	Dietetic Services	1
	Health Promotion	7
	Environmental Health	4
Kerry	Nursing	3.78
	Occupational Therapy Services	1.6
	Speech & Language Therapy Services	2
	Dental Services	2
	Physiotherapy Services	2.48
	Dietetic Services	1
	Health Promotion	2

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Fitzgerald
Chief Officer,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare