

21st September 2020

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Re: PQ22457/20 To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons that applied for Ireland's call; and the number that were offered full-time positions versus agency positions in tabular form

Dear Deputy Farrell,

Many thanks for your representation in relation to the Be on Call for Ireland initiative.

From mid February 2020 the HSE began to make preparations to increase significantly the capacity within the health services to manage the challenges presented by Covid.

From a staffing perspective this included a number of strategies including; 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.

Recruitment across the HSE is conducted through HBS Recruit, the Shared Service component of the HSE, together with appointments being made locally throughout the Hospital Groups and CHOs. There was significant recruitment across the HSE during the period of Covid.

A further project was developed to recruit additional healthcare staff. This was the 'Be on Call for Ireland' initiative which launched on St Patrick's Day. Given the anticipated increase in demand for hospital care and for community services predicted, and the pressure evident on health services in Spain and Italy at this time, the main priority of this project was to provide 'job ready' health care professionals to the health services.

"Be on Call for Ireland" was an entirely separate initiative to that of "Ireland's Call" which was a philanthropic enterprise set up by business leaders to repatriate healthcare workers to Ireland. The information provided in this response refers to the HSE initiative "Be on Call for Ireland".

With regards to your question **"To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons that applied for Ireland's call; and the number that were offered full-time positions versus agency positions in tabular form"**.

At the time of project launch, the widest possible cohort of potential applicants were given the opportunity to apply. This was to meet the potentially unprecedented service and social care demands. Through the 'Be on Call for Ireland' recruitment campaign, the health services aimed to harness the potential for the most flexible work force in health. 73,000 applicants registered with the "Be on Call for Ireland" database. Registrations ranged from those who had highly relevant medical experience (e.g. Doctors) to those offering general help (e.g. offering use of their car).

As the virus progressed through the population, it began to be understood the live impact the disease was having on the health service and the potential staffing needs at any time. The aim of the project was to determine availability of relevant candidates in line with service need at any specific time. Please find below

Table A which outlines the overall breakdown of candidates who registered with “Be on Call for Ireland” and the actions taken to progress those applications / detail of how service needs met through other initiatives.

Table A		
Static Overview of Registrations for Be on Call for Ireland (Figures Rounded)		Comment
Nursing/Midwifery*	6,500	Of which 1,700+ Nursing / Midwifery Undergraduates processed as HCAs or Pre -Reg Nurses under separate initiatives
Medical/Dental	4,000	Of which 1,300+ Undergraduate Doctors processed under local and intern initiatives
Health & Social Care Professional	9,000	Majority of HSCP recruitment needs met through use of existing recruitment panels
Ambulance	300	Ambulance recruitment needs met through existing HSE panels
Support Staff, Patient & Client Care	9,000	Majority of Support Staff needs met through Nursing / Midwifery Undergraduates / Health Care Assistant initiative.
Management Admin	13,000	Management/ Admin requirements met through Public / Civil Service Re-deployment Scheme
Volunteer	15,000	Volunteer needs met through the Government Volunteer Scheme and through local volunteer networks
Other useful skill area	16,000	Majority of registrations in this category not relevant to healthcare requirements
No work area / profession identified by applicant	500	No work area / profession identified by applicant
Total*	73,300	*Of which 12,000 identified as already working in healthcare / not registered or withdrew at outset

It should be noted that significant numbers who applied for the ‘Be on Call for Ireland’ did not have experience in healthcare. However, in a time of national crisis it was heartening for the general public, and indeed the health services, to see the level of good will towards supporting the health and social care sectors. In response to the impact of the pandemic on the health service, the focus of the ‘Be on Call for Ireland’ initiative progressed from being a general call for support to that of focus on making job ready and available experienced and qualified personnel who could provide direct patient care or support the provision of that care in our Hospitals and Community Services. The greatest service need was in front line services.

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 who indicated they were available to work and had the relevant experience needed by the services at that time, was approximately 2,000.

The ‘Be on Call’ initiative particularly focused on these 2,000 candidates, in line with service needs in particular locations.

The current relevant applicant pool is approximately 1600 as candidates are offered the opportunity to unsubscribe if they are no longer available to work in the health services. Some of the reasons candidates have given for unsubscribing include: returned to work, caring responsibilities, health concerns. The available applicant pool figure updates regularly in line with candidate availability and the addition of new relevant candidates as per service needs.

As of 21st September 2020, 240 doctors, nurses and health & social care professionals have been deployed from the 'Be on Call for Ireland' initiative to HSE services in both community, acute and public health departments. These 240 were appointed on agency contracts. As of August 2020, 80% of those remained in their "Be on Call for Ireland" role.


As the focus of the initiative was on matching relevant candidate availability to specific service needs, there is no data collected on those who were offered full time positions as job offers were progressed based on the individual availability of a candidate and a match to the qualifications needed / the location of a post to that candidate. This means roles arose and based on the availability of a candidate, the completion of their recruitment screening, the specific requirements and location of a role posts were filled as they arose. Services had sight of the available relevant candidates and drew down from that cohort in line with their specific service needs at any given time.

The "Be on Call for Ireland" recruitment initiative was part of an overall recruitment effort made by the HSE. During the COVID-19 period over 5,200 jobs were filled by the national recruitment during this period. These were appointed as HSE employees. Substantial recruitment also took place at local level in community and acute settings. This figure demonstrates that the vast majority of COVID-19 related recruitment was to HSE contracts of employment.

Contracts of Employment	Be on Call for Ireland Agency Contracts	HSE Contracts of employment via HBS Recruit
	240	5200

If there is anything further you require in relation to this or any other matter, please do not hesitate to revert.

Yours Sincerely,



Eithne Fox
Assistant National Director HBS HR