



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

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**BY EMAIL ONLY**

**Deputy David Cullinane**

Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

09 August 2021

**PQ 21165-21 - Deputy David Cullinane: To ask the Minister for Health the additional staff brought into public health departments in 2020 and to date in 2021, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic; the HSE, agency and secondment breakdown of such posts; the number of posts which will be retained; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

Thank you for your representation.

I refer to response issued to PQ 21164-21. Resourcing of Public Health Departments has been changeable over the past 12-18 months in response to changes in service demand and supporting infrastructure (ie. The establishment of the Test and Trace Programme and Vaccination Programme). During wave 1 of the Covid-19 pandemic, surge capacity was enabled through redeploying staff from across the health service and wider public sector to support public health departments. At the peak of the first wave (May 2020), there was in excess of 700 staff providing services within the Public Health departments. Between May 2020 and June 2020 the number of redeployed staff available to Public Health decreased with staff being recalled to substantive posts as activity resumed across the health service.

Acknowledging that permanent resources within the public health function were, at the time, insufficient across all disciplines to sustain Covid-19 response over the course of 6 – 18 months, the CCO commissioned a special purpose working group to develop a workforce plan in Q3 2020, which was approved and funded by the Department of Health in Q4 2020. With full implementation, this plan will deliver 171 WTE permanent resources to Departments of Public Health across medical, nursing, surveillance / epidemiology, operations management and administrative support, as well as temporary surge capacity.

In Q4 2020, a dedicated Public Health Pandemic Recruitment team was mobilised to progress recruitment of these posts at pace. Services were provided sanction to fill all approved vacancies (temporary and permanent) with temporary staff pending permanent appointment. By the end of 2020, there were 418 WTEs employed across all Public Health Departments, representing an increase of 101 since 18/09/2020.

The recruitment status of the 171 WTE permanent resources approved for the Public Health Departments is outlined in the table below.

Department	Posts in Pre-employment	Posts Commencing	Posts Commenced	Total Posts Accepted	Total Required	% Complete
DPH East	0	1	24.5	25.5	51.5	50%
DPH Midlands	0	0	10.5	10.5	11.5	91%
DPH North East	0	0	17	17	24	70%
DPH North West	0	0	7	7	9	78%
DPH South	0	1	10	11	18	61%
DPH South East	0	0	14	14	19	74%
DPH Midwest	1	0	12	13	20	65%
DPH West	0	0	13	13	18	72%
<b>Total</b>	1	2	108	111	171	

Second round, geographically targeted campaigns are currently under way to fill remaining vacancies unfilled following the first round campaigns. The recruitment environment is very competitive, particularly in the Eastern region.

All 171 WTE of these approved permanent resources will be retained. The requirement to fill approved permanent posts via agency on a temporary basis will decrease as recruitment progresses and permanent resources are on-boarded.

As pandemic demand recedes, these resources will be realigned within departments of Public Health to support the resumption of the full remit of services across all domains of public health practice (health protection, health service improvement, health improvement and health intelligence) within fundamentally reformed and strengthened, consultant delivered model of Public Health Service delivery.

I hope this provides you with assistance.

Yours faithfully




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Sharon Hayden  
General Manager  
Office of the CCO