



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta um Phleanáil agus Chlaochlú Straitéiseach
Seomra 2.49, Ospidéal Dr Steevens', Lána Steevens', BAC D08 W2A8
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Office of the National Director Strategic Planning and Transformation
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Deputy Mairead Farrell
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

8th April 2021

PQ Number: 15516/21

Dear Deputy Farrell,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your above referenced Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health. The question concerned was referred to Strategic Planning and Transformation for review and direct response, as we are managing the HSE's Covid-19 Contact Management Programme (CMP).

Parliamentary Question: To ask the Minister for Health the role a company (Abtran) is playing in the provision of contact tracing; the cost of the contract; the amount spent on management consultancy fees in 2020 and to date in 2021; if the hiring of the company went through a normal procurement procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

– Deputy Mairead Farrell

Response:

Thank you for your question. The HSE's Contact Management Programme (CMP) was established in March 2020 as part of the HSE's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The CMP was initially resourced by HSE staff who were redeployed from other functions in early March 2020 and external partners such as third level institutes, the Defence Forces and other public bodies e.g. the Revenue Commissioners etc. This approach was put in place as part of a short to medium term response however; given the on-going nature of the global pandemic a longer term and more sustainable approach to staffing has now been put in place. The recruitment of a dedicated full-time workforce has allowed previously redeployed HSE staff to return to their substantive posts, posts which were often patient facing. This longer term approach is based on a blended use of external and internal staff, engaged through a variety of external providers including organisations such as CPL and Abtran.

Through this workforce management process the CMP has now developed its own workforce and has put in place sustainable and effective arrangements with other organisations to support us in times of surge. Staff have been in the main recruited by CPL Healthcare on behalf of the HSE to provide Contact Tracing services. We have over 800 people working as contact tracers across six contact tracing centres (CTCs), and we have formalised relationships with the Defence Forces and our Environmental Health Service to augment our response as when needed.



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As part of the arrangements in place to both augment capacity in CTCs to provide contact tracing services at the necessary scale, as we entered the third wave of this global pandemic in December 2020, and to support the CMP to develop a more robust, streamlined and efficient contact centre management structure, the services of a number of external providers have been engaged. While CPL have been engaged to provide the majority of the staff for contact tracing, Abtran was engaged to provide a team (less than 50 at present) to support contact tracing services directly (making non clinical call 3s) on a short term basis (initial three month contract) to assist the HSE in responding to the unprecedented surge in cases of COVID-19 during the third wave of the pandemic (Provision of CT Services).

Abtran have also been engaged to build specific call centre management capability and expertise and embed best practice across our CTCs. This includes, the delivery of specific workstreams such as the design, development and deployment of a Workforce Management (WFM) System for our CTCs, which has brought clarity and robustness to capacity planning at a critical juncture in the CMP since it was introduced in December, a quality and training framework to ensure consistency of services and provision of experienced resources to quickly build capability and capacity, for example team leads, quality and training leads and team coaches etc. This contract is for the period **November 2020 - June 2021** and includes estimated costs for 86 staff. There are 22 staff in place under this contract in CTCs at this time. (Op management services)

The expenditure to date is €658,333.52 (inclusive of VAT) and relates to activities in December 2020 and January 2021. These are itemised below:

€76,509.49 – December 2020 Provision of CT Services
€316,382.07 – January 2021 Provision of CT Services
€81,612.71 – December 2020 Op Management Services
€183,829.25 – January 2021 Op Management Services

The total *estimated* value of the contracts in place with Abtran for the provision of Contact Tracing services and for the provision of management supports for the delivery of such services is **up to the value** of €4,140,500. The company concerned is on the Government framework agreement for management consultancy and all costs are in line with costs for similar type services. As with similar contracts put in place between the HSE and external providers during the response to COVID-19 a full procurement process did not take place at the time due to the urgency of putting in place immediate additional capacity as part of the response to the management of a larger projected surge in late December – beyond agreed service capacity levels. Article 33.2 (c) of the EU procurement directive and guidance note 2020/C 108-1/01 permits contracting authorities to enter into arrangements through a negotiated process without the prior publication of a contract notice in certain circumstances. This is permitted in circumstances where for reasons of extreme urgency, brought about by events unforeseeable by the contracting authority, the time limits for open or restricted procedures or competitive procedures with negotiations cannot be complied with. Due to the nature of the pandemic such events arise that necessitate contractual arrangements to be put in place as a matter of extreme urgency and this is such a case. It should also be noted that consideration was also given to further internal and broader public sector re-deployment, which as



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set out above is not a sustainable approach to addressing gaps in this area nor would it assist with the operational management aspects of the work required.

Procurement advice was sought and the awarding of the contracts concerned due to urgent requirements to respond to the surge in cases, was agreed in advance as part of the operational response to the management of the surge in December 2020.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me on 087 6312049 or via email strategicplanning@hse.ie.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Ryan'.

Sarah Ryan
Business Manager
Office of the National Director, Strategic Planning and Transformation and Head of CMP