



15th April 2021

Deputy David Cullinane
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ 17463.21 “To ask the Minister for Health the number of staff currently employed in Covid-19 testing and tracing by occupation; the number of dedicated staff in comparison to those who have been redeployed in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

PQ 17462.21 “To ask the Minister for Health the number of applicants to test and trace positions currently on a panel; the status of same on the panels in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

PQ 17464.21 “To ask the Minister for Health the number of staff ready to begin work in testing and tracing but who have yet to be on boarded; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

PQ 17465.21 “To ask the Minister for Health the number of staff who were on boarded for testing and for tracing but who have since left the job; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Questions which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response. I have outlined our response to these questions in one correspondence and further broken this down by occupation between the Contract Management Programme and Swabbers for ease of reference.

Contact Tracers

During the early stages of the pandemic, Contact Tracing services were being provided by a blend of redeployed HSE staff, Army resources, redeployed Civil and Public servants from organisations such as Third Level Educational institutions and Government Departments including Revenue. 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 been put in place. As part of this longer term plan, the HSE developed an Operating Model for the National Testing and Tracing function during the summer of 2020. A key component of this was to recruit a dedicated workforce for testing and contact tracing.

Recruitment in the Contact Management Programme is constantly under review to ensure that we have a consistent supply of trained contact tracers in place to meet demand and to respond to natural attrition. Recruitment is carried out by the third party agency CPL who have an ongoing campaign where they pipeline candidates on a weekly basis based on requirements for contact tracers per Contact Tracing Centre. CPL draw down candidates based on their current availability with priority being given to those with a clinical background and their availability to work full time across 7 days. Panels are not formed as candidate availability is subject to change.

As of 12th April there is a total headcount of 867 persons employed in the HSE Contact Management Programme (CMP) which includes 41 redeployed staff. As part of our ongoing recruitment process



we anticipate a further 124 contact tracers to be on boarded up to the end of May. Since the engagement of third party resource suppliers, approximately 262 staff who were on boarded have left the programme and have been replaced /are being replaced as vacancies arise. The attrition rate is broadly in line with industry standards for contact centres.

Swabbers

A total of 782 Community Swabbers have been hired and on-boarded to date. These are special purpose HSE contracts with a combination of 6 - 12 months offered which can be reviewed once completed. I wish to advise that there are currently 338 candidates still in pre-employment clearances not yet placed, of that 338, 78 are completed clearances and are panelled for various test centres nationwide. The number of persons with a start date who are yet to commence stands at 13, these are all scheduled to start over the next four weeks.

In early December a census was completed with regards to staff who were redeployed in the Community to Swabbing. Since that census was undertaken, the numbers of staff redeployed has changed on a frequent basis, in some cases daily, depending on demand as a result of the third wave of this pandemic so it is not possible at this time to give confirmation of redeployment figures. However, I can confirm that an updated census is currently being undertaken and we will be in a position to provide a more detailed update once this is complete.

The recruitment and training process for Testing and Tracing is ongoing and as ever we continue to monitor requirements based on current and projected demands.

I trust this addresses your questions.

Yours sincerely,

Niamh O'Beirne

Niamh O'Beirne
National Lead Testing and Tracing