



22nd June 2021

Deputy Michael Ring
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ 23594/21 “To ask the Minister for Health the person or body that authorised the appointment of a company (Abtran) to run the contact tracing centres; the mandate the company was given; the position of the company in the corporate structure of track and trace; if managers of the company have the authority to overrule existing HSE managers already in place in contact tracing centres; the way in which the company is funded; the extent of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Ring,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response. We have not been in a position to issue our response until now due to the Cyberware attack on our systems but please now see below information as provided by our colleagues in the HSE's Contact Management Programme.

The HSE's Contact Management Programme (CMP) was established in March 2020 to rapidly scale and support its public health and health protection capacity in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Contact tracing and infectious disease surveillance are core health protection activities undertaken by the eight Departments of Public Health in the HSE under the Health Acts 1947 and 1953; Infectious Disease Regulations 1981.

Initially, the CMP was resourced by HSE staff redeployed from across its services and staff from a range of external partners, e.g., Higher Education Institutes, Defence Forces, Revenue Commissioners, other public bodies, and volunteers. This approach was put in place as part of a crisis short-medium term response. However, given the global pandemic's ongoing nature, a longer-term and more sustainable approach to staffing was required so that redeployed staff could return to their substantive posts, which were often patient facing, and thereby enable resumption of business as usual health services that were paused during the early stages of the pandemic.

In autumn 2020, the HSE's National Test & Trace Programme committed that the CMP would work to build a sustainable contact tracing service. This longer-term approach is based on a blended use of external and internal staff, engaged through various external providers, including organisations such as Abtran, CPL and Covalen.

The CMP has established six Contact Tracing Centres (CTCs) in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick with over 900 staff. Staff are rostered across the operating hours of 8 am to 8 pm, seven days a week. Through this workforce management process, the CMP has now developed its workforce and has put sustainable and practical arrangements with other organisations (internal and external to the HSE) to support us in times of surge.

Due to the scale of the effort required, external supports were engaged by the HSE temporarily, which is part of the nature of pandemic responses globally. Staff have been mainly recruited by CPL Healthcare on behalf of the HSE to provide Contact Tracing services.



As above a number of external organisations are supporting the HSE in the management of the response to Covid-19. Abtran, is one of these organisations. They were engaged by the HSE in December 2020 given their significant experience in operating Contact Centres. They are on a Government Framework for the provision of such services. Abtran has been engaged, by the HSE, to build specific call centre management capability and expertise and embed best practice across our Contact Tracing Centres. This includes, the delivery of specific work streams such as;

- The design, development and deployment of a Workforce Management (WFM) System for our Contact Tracing Centres. The WFM 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. 45 Staff are currently supporting operations and training/quality improvement initiatives in our Contact Tracing Centres (contract under review at present).
- Abtran was engaged to provide a team to support contact tracing services directly making non clinical call 3s, on a short term basis.

HSE senior managers provide oversight and governance at each of our CTCs and report directly through the HSE operational reporting line in the CMP. HSE management in each CTC is responsible for performance oversight and the service's operation that, as you are aware, spans an 84-hour working week. The HSE has full responsibility for every operational aspect of the service.

The HSE has contracts in place with Abtran which encompass the above referenced workstreams. These contracts are subject to review as standard.

We have a transparent, clear service model at CTC level with clear clinical governance structures in place in our CTCs and working well, with multidisciplinary teams in place, again with a blend of staff.

I trust this addresses your question.

Yours sincerely,



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