



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Airgeadais
Feidhmeannacht na
Seirbhíse Sláinte
Seomra 125, Ospidéal
Dr. Steevens
BÁC 8

Office of the Chief Financial Officer
Health Service Executive
Room 125, Dr Steevens
Hospital
Dublin 8

30th November 2021

Deputy Emer Higgins TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Re PQ 55521 21: *To ask the Minister for Health the amount spent by the HSE in contracting debt collection agencies to pursue unpaid statutory charges in each of the years 2013 to 2020 and to date in 2021, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

PQ 55522 21: *To ask the Minister for Health the costs incurred by each public hospital in contracting external debt collection agencies to pursue unpaid statutory charges in each of the years 2013 to 2020 and to date in 2021, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

PQ 55523 21: *To ask the Minister for Health the number of inpatients or inpatient day cases with unpaid inpatient charges whose debt was referred to a debt collection or legal agency in each of the years 2013 to 2020 and to date in 2021, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter*

PQ 55524 21: *To ask the Minister for Health the expenditure by the HSE and public hospitals on referral of statutory charges to external debt collection or legal agencies; the breakdown of expenditure per charge, that is, inpatient charge, outpatient and emergency charge in each of the years 2013 to 2020 and to date in 2021, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Dear Deputy Higgins,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. Your PQ's above have been referred to me for response.

In response to your **PQ 55521 21**, please see **Appendix 1 Table 1** below which shows the total amount spent by the HSE on debt collection agencies for all HSE Statutory locations for the years 2013 to 2020 which is the most recent data available.

In response to your **PQ 55522 21**, please see **Appendix 2 Table 1** below which shows the total amount spent by the HSE on debt collection agencies by each HSE Statutory Acute hospital only for the years 2013 to 2020 which is the most recent data available.

All data was sourced from HSE Regional Finance ledgers. Please note in view of the fact that there are still currently numerous ledger systems in operation in the HSE some differences in coding may arise. The data is for HSE statutory services only. If you are seeking data relating to voluntary entities, you should submit FOI requests to these directly as publicly funded voluntary hospitals are separate entities for FOI purposes. Contact details for voluntary hospitals are available at <http://foi.gov.ie/voluntary-hospitals/>.

In relation to your **PQ 55523 21** requesting “*the number of inpatients or inpatient day cases with unpaid inpatient charges whose debt was referred to a debt collection or legal agency in each of the years 2013 to 2020 and to date in 2021*” and the second part of your **PQ 55524 21** for “*the breakdown of expenditure per charge, that is, inpatient charge, outpatient and emergency charge in each of the*

years', I must inform you that as debt collection continues to be managed at a local level this type of data is not captured centrally within the HSE and is therefore not available.

The shortcomings in the HSE legacy financial systems are well acknowledged and their replacement by a single standard financial system for the Health Sector is at the core of the Finance Reform programme initiated by the Department of Health.

Patients who attend at public hospitals are, depending on their eligibility, and subject to certain exemptions, liable to statutory charges. These are levied under the provisions of the 1970 Health Act. The charges are €100 for an Emergency Department attendance and €80 for an overnight stay, the latter charge is capped at €800 in any 12 month period. The HSE has a statutory obligation to levy and collect these charges and Hospitals have the discretion to operate payment plans where appropriate.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound effect on activity in public hospitals in 2020. At times during the year non-urgent elective surgery was cancelled on NPHET advice; and some activity was displaced into private hospitals. It is also important to note that patients suffering from COVID-19 were exempt from statutory charges.

Further information on Hospital Charges is available on the HSE website at <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/acute-hospitals-division/patient-care/hospital-charges>

HSE policy and procedures for debt collection are covered by NFR 25(National Financial Regulations) which is available to view on the HSE website on the link below:
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/financial%20regulations/nfr25.pdf>

Hospitals are required, under NFR 25, to refer an unpaid debt to a collection agency after a period of time from date of billing. If any patient has difficulty paying a hospital bill the regulations allow for the hospital and the patient to agree an installment arrangement.

The HSE seeks to maximise the recovery of income in a socially responsible, ethical, efficient and cost effective way. It should be noted that the collection of monies owed is a continuous, daily and large scale process.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at sarah.anderson1@hse.ie or tel: 087 9423319.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Anderson

Sarah Anderson
General Manager
Corporate Finance
sarah.anderson1@hse.ie
Tel: 087 9423319

Appendix 1

Table 1

HSE Total Debt Collection costs for the years 2013 to 2020	
<i>HSE Statutory services only</i>	
Year	Amount €
2013	439,307
2014	532,785
2015	567,724
2016	585,822
2017	603,798
2018	574,515
2019	687,214
2020	568,503

Source: HSE Regional Finance Ledger Systems

Appendix 2

Table 1

HSE Total Debt Collection costs by Acute Hospital only for the years 2013 to 2020								
<i>HSE Statutory services only</i>								
Acute Hospital Name	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€
Cavan General Hospital	5,229	13,199	19,770	17,657	24,512	29,613	19,608	8,543
Connolly Hospital	39,286	35,582	38,578	53,079	41,651	37,871	45,018	32,094
CORK UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL MATERNITY	0	0	0	0	0	324	2,950	3,389
CORK UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL	84,359	84,317	83,389	85,355	86,889	99,488	107,461	99,784
Croom Hospital	2,639	3,008	5,324	1,668	881	877	1,076	2,327
Ennis Hospital	1,806	2,441	1,116	340	9,468	4,280	3,610	3,431
KERRY GENERAL HOSPITAL	5,326	3,116	2,935	3,916	1,629	1,791	2,707	6,749
Kilcreene Hospital	1,119	329	201	369	253	256	361	444
Letterkenny University Hospital	2,898	14,018	8,399	10,739	8,552	17,857	10,899	4,682
Louth County Hospital	2,227	3,665	4,582	6,353	7,423	6,899	6,999	3,534
MALLOW GENERAL HOSPITAL	193	589	345	30	70	796	65	5,802
Mayo University Hospital	14,526	43,117	20,291	21,024	35,166	27,135	50,042	106,000
MRH MULLINGAR	37,399	27,223	19,309	28,995	18,880	30,634	30,830	24,933
MRH PORTLAOISE	23,656	29,516	20,162	23,415	46,024	18,710	24,810	28,041
MRH Tullamore	30,017	29,546	27,911	39,594	23,996	27,196	32,396	27,314
Naas General Hospital	11,298	12,506	9,738	20,257	14,956	14,207	29,494	10,622
Nenagh Hospital	2,569	3,002	2,881	1,168	2,485	4,602	6,220	6,845
Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda	16,245	40,004	42,324	32,815	41,958	34,032	52,635	10,987
Our Lady's Hospital Navan	3,675	7,454	7,088	13,427	13,301	16,013	14,228	10,876
Portiuncula Hospital	0	0	16,641	25,208	19,896	18,097	23,667	5,447
Roscommon University Hospital	381	1,865	1,201	461	302	2,822	1,996	540
Sligo University Hospital	6,910	6,019	11,480	2,143	2,999	9,016	14,964	12,150
South Tipperary General Hospital	8,461	14,208	19,333	16,674	8,959	7,972	15,982	7,342
St Luke's Hospital, Kilkenny	5,752	6,585	8,600	10,217	18,861	14,032	16,835	13,455
St. Columille's Hospital	13,659	8,079	5,345	7,237	10,541	7,253	4,577	6,009
University Hospital Galway	42,266	75,113	91,765	65,798	71,274	63,585	59,287	51,287
University Hospital Limerick	22,820	27,886	32,382	39,327	29,337	32,305	31,551	24,197
University Hospital Waterford	43,366	29,990	51,046	47,505	38,858	29,137	46,325	27,121
University Maternity Hospital, Limerick	110	212	280	0	39	1,666	891	1,025
Wexford General Hospital	9,856	8,664	13,249	12,312	24,194	15,663	29,343	23,103
Total Acute Hospital Division	438,048	531,254	565,665	587,081	603,355	574,128	686,826	568,074
<i>Source: HSE Regional Finance Ledger Systems</i>								