



27<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett  
Dáil Éireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**PQ 43301/21 “To ask the Minister for Health the reason level 2 contact tracers are not paid the same as level 1 staff; if the quota will be removed for phone calls per day with the understanding that some calls are difficult and take longer than others in order to remove the pressure that staff face doing this important job; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”**

Dear Deputy Boyd Barrett,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

It is important to provide some background information on the HSE's Contact Tracing function first. In non-surge times, the contact tracing model is split into three phases, commonly referred to as Calls 1, 2 and 3:

- Call 1: Following a positive Covid-19 test, the Contact Tracer will call the patient to notify them of their result and conduct a comprehensive Positive Patient Assessment (PPA).
- Call 2: Following Call 1, the Contact Tracers will again contact the index patient to record the details of their close contacts.
- Call 3: A third call is then subsequently made to those close contacts to notify them of their potential exposure to the virus and advise them what to do if they become unwell or develop symptoms.

Level 1 Contact Tracers were recruited to notify index patients of their Covid-19 test results and conduct an in-depth Positive Patient Assessment (PPA). This PPA contains a multitude of questions designed to assess the patient's lifestyle factors, medical background and behavioural patterns. Level 2 Contact Tracers were recruited to record an index patient's close contacts, and subsequently notify close contacts of their potential exposure to Covid-19. This distinction between the roles is the reason for the difference in remuneration. During the recent surge, Call 1s have been suspended and instead, Level 1 and 2 Contact Tracers were all collectively conducting Call 2As. The Call 2A is a variation of the Call 2 where the emphasis is on the expedited collection of close contact information. This Call 2A also includes a reduced PPA.

The Contact Management Programme continually reaffirms its commitment to providing a world-class service to Index Patients and Close Contacts. There is a universal acknowledgement and acceptance that some calls may be more difficult than others and the service-user's experience is always paramount. Our teams contact as many cases/contacts as possible on a daily basis in order to minimise the spread of Covid-19.

I trust this addresses your question.

Yours sincerely,

*Niamh O'Beirne*

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**Niamh O'Beirne**  
**National Lead Testing and Tracing**