



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

8th February 2022

Deputy Brid Smith TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Re PQ 3514 22: *To ask the Minister for Health the number of agency staff employed by the health service during the pandemic by role.*

Dear Deputy Smith,

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 above has been referred to me for response.

I regret to inform you that the number of agency staff employed is not centrally recorded by the HSE. HSE agency staffing resources are collated on the basis of expenditure.

Please see **Appendix 1 Table 1** below which shows the total HSE spend on agency staff for HSE Statutory services only for the full year 2020 and for the period January to October 2021 which is the most recent data currently available. The breakdown provided is by the Department of Health staff categories i.e. Medical/Dental, Nursing, Management/Admin, Paramedical, Support Services and Maintenance/Technical staff. The data provided was sourced from the HSE Consolidated Financial Intelligence system and is for HSE Statutory services only. Please note that the 2021 data is draft only and is subject to change within the year end audit process. Please also 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.

In 2020 and 2021 the HSE sourced additional agency staff primarily to support the expansion of the workforce in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and also to support service delivery and COVID-19 response due to increased staff absence due to COVID-19. Due to the immediate nature of the unprecedented emergency, coupled with the additional strain already being felt by the HSE recruitment services, it was necessary to engage outside agencies to assist in this work. Agency contracts are in place for Contact Tracing staff within the HSE National Contact Management Programme. The HSELive service has been providing the COVID-19 helpline throughout the pandemic. In addition agency teams were engaged within the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OoCIO) primarily to commission the technology for new centres for both testing and tracing and also to support those users. These initiatives, among others, related to the HSE's response to the COVID-19 emergency have directly impacted on agency costs incurred in 2020 and into 2021 particularly in the Management/Administration staffing category.

Agency expenditure is under constant review and the reduction and control of agency costs continues to be a particular focus for the Health Service. The effective management of variable pay costs forms a major element of operational cost-containment plans and is subject to continuous review at the performance meetings held under the performance and accountability framework. However, it is important to note that in addition to the specific critical response to the COVID-19 pandemic there are a variety of reasons driving agency demand. Recruitment and retention of Clinical, Nursing and other key staff is a constant challenge and impacts adversely on the ability to maintain safe and effective services. The balance between high cost and high risk to service quality and safety is struck through agency and overtime use to provide/maintain necessary services. Agency staffing is also used for the replacement of short term illness and maternity leave and allows for flexible services designed to meet specific Service User needs, variation in activity and as required where there is a short term critical service need.

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

Yours sincerely



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Appendix 1 to PQ 3514 22

Table 1

HSE Agency staff costs by staff category for Full Year 2020 and for the period January to October 2021		
<i>HSE Statutory Services Only</i>		
Staff Category	2020 €'000	Ytd Oct 2021 €'000
Medical/Dental	94,653	78,720
Nursing	88,350	98,490
Management/Administration	44,047	88,439
Paramedical	34,453	49,061
Support Services	127,918	146,465
Maintenance/Technical	635	559
Total	390,057	461,735
<i>Source : HSE Consolidated Financial Intelligence System (CFI)</i>		