



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

18th July 2022

Deputy David Cullinane TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Re PQ 35344 22: *To ask the Minister for Health the amount that the HSE spent on agency staff in each of the years 2018, 2019 to 2021 and to date in 2022 and by the name of the agency by each year spend, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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

Please see **Appendix 1** (separate excel attachment) which shows the total HSE Agency Staff payments by Vendor, for HSE Statutory services only, for the years 2019 to 2021. The data provided was sourced from the HSE Regional Finance ledger systems and is for HSE Statutory services only. 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 information is not readily directly available from the HSE finance systems so we limited our request to the Regional Finance units for extraction of the information for the years 2019 to 2021.

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 were put in place for Contact Tracing staff within the HSE National Contact Management Programme. The HSE Live service provided the COVID-19 helpline throughout the pandemic. In addition agency teams were engaged within the Vaccination programme and the Test and Trace programme. These staff augmented HSE staff supporting all aspects of both programmes including to commission and support the roll out of the technology for new centres, supporting all the vaccine staff and Test and Trace. 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 2021.

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

Sarah Anderson

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