



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

27<sup>th</sup> July 2022

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

**Re PQ 38332 22:** *To ask the Minister for Health the amount spent on agency staff in 2021 and to date in 2022 across the health service broken down by staffing type and to whom the payments were made; the breakdown of the amount spent on nursing agency staff to date in 2022; his plans to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

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.

The HSE Finance systems capture agency spend by staff category. Please see **Appendix 1 Table 1** below which shows the total HSE spend on agency staff for HSE Statutory services only for the year 2021 and YTD June 2022 which is the most recent data 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 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 were put in place for Contact Tracing staff within the HSE National Contact Management Programme. The HSELive 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 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](mailto:sarah.anderson1@hse.ie) or tel: 087 9423319.

Yours sincerely

*Sarah Anderson*

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## Appendix 1 to PQ 38332 22

**Table 1**

<b>HSE Agency staff costs by staff category for the year 2021 &amp; YTD June 2022</b>		
<i>HSE Statutory Services Only</i>		
<b>Staff Category</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>YTD Jun 2022</b>
	<b>€'000</b>	<b>€'000</b>
Medical/Dental	96,392	55,056
Nursing	123,217	63,528
Management/Administration	108,936	53,297
Paramedical	60,379	23,597
Support Services	178,807	97,082
Maintenance/Technical	658	494
<b>Total</b>	<b>568,389</b>	<b>293,053</b>
<i>Source : HSE Consolidated Financial Intelligence System (CFI)</i>		
<i>Note : 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.</i>		