



Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Oibríochtaí
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhísí Sláinte
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27th July 2022

Mr. Duncan Smith, TD
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

By email to: duncan.smith@oireachtas.ie

Ref: PQs 32606/08/10/12/14/16/18/28/30/32/36/38/42/2022

To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of [certain professions/grades of staff as set out in Appendix 1] employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter

Dear Deputy Smith,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for response. I apologise for the delay in responding to you and any inconvenience caused.

The HSE does not collate or report on staffing levels in the context of optimal levels; however, we provide a suite of staffing information through our monthly Census Report. The report for May 2022 can be found here: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/our-workforce/workforce-reporting/health-service-personnel-census-may-2022.pdf>.

You will see in reviewing the latest HSE workforce census report, under Staff Groups, page 1, and Grade Groups, page 1 – 3, the staffing levels across the various professions that you have queried as part of the above referenced PQs are set out in the main, with a number of positive trends in terms of overall staffing numbers and associated increases over time (the report includes comparative data for previous years with WTEs included as at December 2019, 2020 and 2021 and latest WTE and headcount figures as at May 2022). It is worth noting that the growth in staffing over the last 3 years has been substantial and has been delivered against the backdrop of the requirement to also maintain staffing levels in the context of staff turnover annually that at a minimum requires us to recruit a further 9,500 staff.

For service continuity, the HSE focuses on retaining and replacing existing vacancies through national and local recruitment campaigns for staff across all our services.

As the needs of the public evolve and change in response to the changing demographic of the country, health services must also grow and change to meet these needs. The HSE is committed to expanding its workforce both in number and skill as required through actively modernising our approach to workforce planning, recruitment, retention, upskilling and professional service provision.

A range of criteria and factors concerning staffing levels are used as part of our annual estimates and service planning process and related approach to Workforce Planning. This includes the funding made available through the Letter of Determination, Ministerial Priorities, service and service user need, and policy and strategy implementation.




Related policies and strategies that include references to specific /optimal staffing levels in specific disciplines would also be of clear relevance here e.g. midwifery etc. Any such policies/papers would be responded to as appropriate within available resources, including funding allocations, and the availability of a recruitment pipeline of trained individuals within the grade types/disciplines concerned to facilitate this recruitment.

Other possible recruitment measures are being explored with Government that may enable us to add to our workforce e.g. expanding options to hire graduates from other countries, considering alternative pathways for HSCP graduates to enter employment at an earlier stage in the process, among other options.

As above recruitment and retention is a significant area of focus for the HSE across a range of staff categories and disciplines and will remain so in 2023 and beyond.

I trust that this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,


Damien McCallion
Chief Operations Officer



Appendix 1 – PQs Comprehended by this response

PQ 32606/22 To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of physiotherapists employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith
PQ 32608/22 To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of nurses employed by the HSE are at; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith
PQ 32610/22 To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of healthcare assistants employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith
PQ 32612/22 To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of speech and language therapists employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith
PQ 32614/22 To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of occupational therapists employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith
PQ 32616/22 To ask the Minister for Health how far below the optimum levels of staffing of medical social workers employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith
PQ 32618/22 To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of radiographers employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith
PQ 32628/22 To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of cardiologists employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith
PQ 32630/22 To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of dietitians employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith
PQ 32632/22 To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of gastroenterologists employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith
PQ32636/22 To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of oncologists employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith
PQ 32638/22 To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of consultant child and adolescent psychiatrists employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith
PQ 32642/22 To ask the Minister for Health to outline how far below optimum levels of staffing of clinical pharmacists employed by the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith