



29th Mar. 2022

Deputy David Cullinane,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: david.cullinane@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 13276/22

Question: To ask the Minister for Health the number of staff employed in Covid-19 testing and tracing for each month in 2021 and in January and February 2022; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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

The Test and Trace programme has a number of key functions including;

- Swabbing
- Clinical Diagnostic testing (laboratories)
- Contact Management

In addition, there is a central operating team which is supported by a wide range of other HSE functions. These include functions such as logistics, operations, communications, estates and ICT to name a few. Separately our laboratory services are either provided within our acute hospitals, NVRL or commercial laboratories. As a result, I have not included these resources as they are often working across multiple functions or services.

Hence I have included the functions with large numbers of dedicated staffing below. I have provided the numbers and have broken down the response by occupation between the Contract Management Programme (CMP) and Swabbers for ease of reference.

Contact Management:

Please find in the below table the monthly headcount of staff employed in Covid-19 contact management on a monthly basis for the period Jan. 2021 – Feb. 2022 inclusive:

| | Jan 21 | Feb 21 | Mar 21 | Apr 21 | May 21 | Jun 21 | Jul 21 | Aug 21 | Sep 21 | Oct 21 | Nov 21 | Dec 21 | Jan 22 | Feb 22 |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Headcount | 820 | 882 | 893 | 846 | 960 | 936 | 926 | 967 | 987 | 879 | 883 | 934 | 911 | 759 |
| WTE | 761 | 793 | 806 | 769 | 913 | 894 | 882 | 926 | 934 | 833 | 844 | 896 | 876 | 723 |



The headcount includes the following:

- Contact tracers
- Administration staff
- Team Leads
- Operations Managers
- Training & Quality Coaches
- Senior Medical Officers
- Public Health Clinical team
- Data Processing Centre staff
- National functions/roles
- Defence forces – *included in headcount as required during periods of surge*

Recruitment in the Contact Management Programme is constantly under review to ensure that we have a consistent supply of trained contact tracers in place to meet demand and to respond to natural attrition.

Swabbing:

A number of staff are employed by the Community Healthcare Organisations in Swabbing and referrals, including swabbers, administration staff, test centre co-ordinators and support staff. The number of staff increased in line with the requirement to increase swabbing capacity. A census is carried out at regular intervals with staffing levels as below:

- March 2021 – 959 WTE;
- August 2021 – 1,136 WTE;
- November 2021 – 1,244 WTE;
- February 2022 – 1,118 WTE.

As ever we continue to monitor staffing requirements for swabbing based on current demands for testing.

In addition, we utilise a team within the National Ambulance Service (NAS) for swabbing. There are 160 WTE approved with varying numbers of staff in place at different times during the pandemic.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Damien McCallion'.

Damien McCallion
National Director
National Lead Test & Trace and Vaccination Programme