



**Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta  
Acmhainní Daonna**  
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhísí,  
Sláinte Ospidéal Dr. Steevens',  
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Róisín Shortall T.D.

12<sup>th</sup> February 2024

( Please note the release of this PQ was delayed due to FORSA action )

**PQ 51781/23** To ask the Minister for Health the impact of the HSE recruitment freeze on the implementation of regional health areas; the status of recruitment of the six regional executive officers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. - Róisín Shortall

Dear Deputy,

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Question which was sent to the HSE for response.

2023 has seen an enormous increase in demand for our services which has and continues to be responded to, as well as new developments and improvements being delivered. To facilitate this service delivery, the HSE has undertaken significant recruitment during the year, with approximately 13,000 replacement posts being filled, as well as an additional 6100 appointments made. The Organisation has delivered on all of the health and social care service commitments outlined in its National Service Plan 2023, having been allocated a budget of €21.124bn by government, which represented the largest budget allocation to public health in the history of the State. The recruitment pause was introduced to ensure that public health services do not exceed its 2023 funded workforce target.

This pause in recruitment is temporary and 2024 will bring an overall additional allocation to the workforce of 2,268 WTE (excluding disability services). Replacement and service development posts can be considered in the context of the National Service Plan 2024 process, which is now underway.

The Six Health Regions are being established within the HSE on the basis of the geographical boundaries agreed by the Government in July 2019. The health regions' Implementation Plan, providing a high level roadmap for implementation, was published in July 2023. Although the full implementation of Health Regions will be a multi-year journey, the Health Regions will be stood up from February 2024 (as the REOs are appointed) and will continue to progress throughout 2024. The transition to Health Regions represents a considerable change to organisational structures and the geographic alignment of the current Hospital Groups and Community Health Organisations. Each Health Region will plan, resource, and deliver health and social care services based on local population needs. Transition planning to the new regions is continuing, including finalising a new HSE Centre structure.

The recruitment process for the REOs is being progressed by PAS and final interviews are due to be held shortly. The HSE is continuing to engage with the Department of Health in respect of approval process for the Health Regions senior leadership teams. The current recruitment pause has not impacted the implementation of the Health Regions and the HSE will continue with the Implementation Plan to 'stand-up' the Health Regions within the timeframes provided.

I trust this clarifies and is of some assistance.

Yours sincerely,

**Marie O'Sullivan**  
National HR