



**Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Airgeadais**

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3<sup>rd</sup> November 2023

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

**Re PQ 45939 23:** *To ask the Minister for Health how much has been spent on agency staff in each of 2022 and 2023; 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 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 Table 1** below which shows the total HSE spend on agency staff for HSE Statutory services only for the full year 2022 and for the period January to August 2023 which is the most recent data currently available. The data provided was sourced from the HSE Consolidated Financial Intelligence system and is for HSE Statutory services only. Please note that the 2023 data is draft only and is subject to change within the year end audit process.

The available supply in the labour market for health workforce continues to be a challenge. This is not unique to Ireland, but rather a global health workforce challenge. 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. Therefore, as part of the HSE's overarching resourcing approach whereby direct employment does not meet the needs of service delivery requirements, agency staff are utilised. This can be for a variety of reasons, including sick absence replacement both long and short term, to replace vacancies currently being actively recruited to, to replace maternity leave etc. The reversal of the Haddington Road Agreement has placed additional resourcing requirements, with the replacement of lost hours in critical services areas, a priority. In advance of the filling of these hours via direct employees, there is a need to prioritise critical services for replacement through agency and overtime. Collectively, these give rise to the utilisation of agency resources however while simultaneously running large scale domestic and international recruitment campaigns to fill through direct employment.

In a number of instances in recent times the HSE have been unable to fill a vacancy even via agency. The agencies have indicated that they are experiencing difficulty in recruiting themselves due to a lack of availability and also accommodation costs.

A programme is in place to seek to manage both agency and overtime use through a combination of rostering arrangements, effective monitoring and reporting whilst also leveraging the benefits of ongoing roll-out of the eHealth staffing programme, which will help deliver a more effective and efficient staffing skill mix.



The majority of agency spend is salary and statutory pay costs such as PRSI, holiday allowance etc. In line with the Protection of Employees (Part -Time Work) Act agency staff have the right to the same basic employment conditions, this includes basic pay, shift premiums, unsocial hours and Sunday rates.

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 45939 23

Table 1

<b>Total HSE Agency Staff Costs for 2022 and for the period January to August 2023</b> <i>HSE Statutory Services Only</i>		
	<b>2022</b> <b>€'000s</b>	<b>*YTD Aug 2023</b> <b>€'000s</b>
Total HSE Agency Staff Costs	619,794	428,552
<i>Source: HSE Consolidated Financial Intelligence System (CFI)</i>		
<i>*Note: 2023 figures are draft only &amp; are subject to change within the year end audit process.</i>		