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23rd April 2024

Deputy David Cullinane TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Re PQ 15468 24: *To ask the Minister for Health the spend by the Health Service Executive on agency staffing and private recruitment firms in each quarter of 2023-2024, inclusive, in tabular form; and the breakdown by recipient.*

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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 HSE spend on agency staff by quarter for the year 2023 and by month for January and February 2024 which is the most recent data available. The breakdown is by the Department of Health staff categories i.e. Medical/Dental, Nursing, Management/Admin, Paramedical, Support Services and Maintenance/Technical staff. The data was sourced from the HSE Consolidated Financial Intelligence system and is for HSE Statutory services only. Please note that the figures for 2023 are draft only and are subject to change pending the finalisation of the 2023 Annual Financial Statements and the completion of the 2023 year end audit process. Please note that the figures for 2024 are draft only and are subject to change. Unfortunately this data is not readily available by recipient or from previously collated data and would need to be manually extracted by Regional Finance staff for which the resources are not available at this time.

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. There are also additional resourcing requirements with the replacement of lost hours in critical services areas following the reversal of the Haddington Road Agreement.

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. At 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 availability and costs.

Agency expenditure is under constant review and the reduction and control of agency costs continues to be a particular focus for the Health Service with specific targets set within the HSE National Service Plan for 2024. 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.

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.

In relation to your request for spend on *“private recruitment firms in each quarter of 2023-2024, inclusive, in tabular form; and the breakdown by recipient.”* I regret to inform you that the information you have requested is not centrally collated nor separately identifiable within the HSE Finance ledgers, nor is it available from previously collated data and would need to be manually extracted by Regional Finance staff for which the resources are not available at this time.

To extract these records requires an extensive exercise in order to separately identify recruitment costs which includes the manual extraction of relevant data by regional finance staff from the numerous HSE financial ledger systems in operation throughout the country and the manual collation of the information.

The shortcomings in the HSE legacy financial systems are well acknowledged and their replacement by a single standard financial system for the Health Sector is at the core of the Finance Reform programme initiated by the Department of Health.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at sarah.anderson1@hse.ie or tel: 087 9423319.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah Anderson".

Sarah Anderson
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Appendix 1 to PQ 15468 24

Table 1

| HSE Agency Staff costs by Staff Category by quarter for 2023 and for the months January & February 2024 | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>HSE Statutory Services Only</i> | | | | | | |
| Staff Category | *Q1 2023 €m | *Q2 2023 €m | *Q3 2023 €m | *Q4 2023 €m | *Jan 2024 €m | *Feb 2024 €m |
| Management/Administration | 27.0 | 15.7 | 18.1 | 25.4 | 7.0 | 6.8 |
| Medical/Dental | 33.0 | 34.4 | 37.7 | 35.1 | 13.0 | 13.0 |
| Nursing | 36.2 | 33.3 | 37.3 | 38.4 | 12.0 | 12.7 |
| Paramedical | 10.6 | 9.8 | 9.2 | 8.6 | 3.2 | 3.1 |
| Support Services | 56.2 | 60.3 | 62.3 | 55.6 | 18.5 | 19.5 |
| Maintenance/Technical | 0.4 | 0.4 | 2.6 | 3.3 | 0.6 | 1.0 |
| Total | 163.4 | 153.8 | 167.2 | 166.4 | 54.4 | 56.0 |

Source : HSE Consolidated Financial Intelligence System (CFI)

**Note : Please note these are the latest figures currently available. 2023 figures are draft only and are subject to change within the year end audit process and also figures for 2024 are draft only at this time and subject to change.*