



Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Airgeadais
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte,
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22 07 2025

Mark Wall TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Re PQ 37794 25: To ask the Minister for Health the total number of agency staff employed by the HSE for each of the past three years, by CHO area, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter

Dear Deputy Wall,

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.

Context:

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.

While operating within spend limits, the HSE Senior Leadership Team have committed to fully deliver on the planned activity levels as set out in the HSE National Service Plan including the Waiting List Action Plan and Urgent and Emergency Care Plan. This requires the dual approach of improving the productivity of key services and managing the level and affordability of our workforce through the application of both the HSE's Pay and Non-Pay control limits. This is particularly focused around staffing levels, including getting to levels of agency and overtime which is sustainable into 2025.



The HSE is focussed on maximum delivery of the savings agreed to as part of the two-year funding agreement set out in the National Service Plan for 2025 i.e. new for 2025 and any undelivered in 2024. As part of the overall financial stabilisation of the HSE, significant progress has been made on pay in terms of planning, allocation and control and the new control environment ensures there is absolute clarity on staffing parameters whilst embedding a culture of continuous improvement in productivity. There remains work still to do to achieve the level of agency and overtime savings required and fundamentally hospitals will be more challenged in terms of living within overall pay allocation including direct pay. The focus on 2025 will be reducing this challenge.

The information you have requested is not centrally available. I regret to inform you that the HSE does not formally record or report the total number of agency staff employed nor has it ever done so, therefore the HSE is not in a position to answer this question.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Anderson

Bainisteoir Ginearálta | General Manager

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