



**Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Airgeadais**  
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23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024

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

**Re PQ 15466 24:** *To ask the Minister for Health the amount spent on debt collectors by the Health Service Executive in each year from 2016-2020; the number of occasions on which debt collectors were used; and the level of charges recovered by debt collectors.*

**PQ 15467 24:** *To ask the Minister for Health the amount spent on debt collectors by the Health Service Executive in each year 2021-2024, by quarter; the number of occasions on which debt collectors were used; and the level of charges recovered by debt collectors.*

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. Your PQs above have been referred to me for response.

Please see **Appendix 1 Table 1** below which shows the total debt collection costs for the HSE for the years 2016 to 2022. The data was sourced from the HSE Regional Finance Ledger systems and is for HSE Statutory services only. The data is not readily available from the HSE finance systems. Annual data up to 2022 has been extracted by each regional finance unit. Data is not yet available for the year 2023 or to date 2024.

The HSE policy and procedures for debt collection are covered by NFR B-2 (National Financial Regulations) which is available to view on the HSE website using the following link: [nfrb2.pdf \(hse.ie\)](https://www.hse.ie/nfrb2.pdf)

With effect from 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023 there are no hospital charges for public inpatient care or day service care, with the removal of these charges announced as part of Budget 2023. Inpatient and day service charges still apply for inpatient and day service care up to and including 16<sup>th</sup> April 2023. Patients who attend at public hospitals are, depending on their eligibility and subject to certain exemptions, liable to statutory charges levied under the provisions of the 1970 Health Act. The charges are €100 for an Emergency Department attendance and, prior to its abolition on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023, €80 for an Inpatient/Day Services charge, with the latter charge capped at €800 in a rolling 12 month period. The HSE has a statutory obligation to levy and collect these charges and Hospitals have the discretion to operate instalment payment plans where appropriate. Any debt incurred prior to the abolition of the statutory inpatient charge is subject to the normal financial regulations.

Debt collection continues to be managed at a local hospital level. Hospitals are required, under NFR B-2, to refer an unpaid debt to a collection agency after a period of time from date of billing. If any patient has difficulty paying a hospital bill the regulations allow for the hospital and



the patient to agree an instalment arrangement. We would advise they contact their hospital directly to discuss this on a one to one basis. Hospital Groups are mindful in implementing these processes that patients may be experiencing stress and/or financial challenges and encourage patients who are having difficulties fulfilling their debt to make contact with the hospital to which the debt is owed in order to make alternative payment arrangements. If hospitals are made aware or become aware of such challenges, agreements may be reached between the patient and hospital on a case by case basis and debt collectors are not included in the process.

The HSE seeks to maximise the recovery of income in a socially responsible, ethical, efficient and cost effective way. It should be noted that the collection of monies owed is a continuous, daily and large scale process.

In relation to your request for *“the number of occasions on which debt collectors were used; and the level of charges recovered by debt collectors.”* I regret to inform you that as debt collection continues to be managed at a local level this type of data is not captured centrally within the HSE and is therefore not available. 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](mailto: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 15466 24 & PQ 15467 24**

**Table 1**

<b>HSE Debt Collection costs for the years 2016 to 2022</b>	
<i>HSE Statutory Services Only</i>	
<b>Year</b>	<b>€</b>
2016	585,822
2017	603,798
2018	574,515
2019	687,214
2020	568,503
2021	448,581
2022	541,233

*Source: HSE Regional Finance Ledger systems*