



**Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Airgeadais**  
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2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024

Deputy Peadar Tóibín TD,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

**Re PQ 36598 24:** *To ask the Minister for Health the amount paid by the HSE for agency workers in each of the past ten years and to date in 2024, in tabular form.*

**PQ 36600 24:** *To ask the Minister for Health the current percentage of persons working in the HSE who are agency workers.*

Dear Deputy Tóibín,

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 PQ's above have been referred to me for response.

Total HSE agency pay costs for HSE Statutory Services is disclosed every year in Note 6 – Summary Analysis of Pay Costs in the HSE Annual Financial Statements (AFS). A link to the HSE Annual Reports and Financial Statements is provided below for your convenience.

[HSE Annual Reports and Financial Statements - HSE.ie](#)

Please see **Appendix 1 Table 1** below which shows the total HSE spend on agency staff for the years 2013 to 2023 and for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024. The data for the years 2013 to 2023 was sourced from the HSE Annual Financial Statements for each year. The data for YTD July 2024 was sourced from the HSE Consolidated Financial Intelligence system. All are for HSE Statutory services only. Please note that the figures for 2024 are draft only and are subject to change.

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 Note 6 to the HSE AFS, which provides a breakdown of HSE Pay costs, total Agency staff costs in the year 2023 amounted to approximately 8.6% of total pay costs excluding superannuation. HSE Agency staffing is recorded and monitored based on costs as Agency staff numbers are not centrally recorded within the HSE.

### **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 2024 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 for 2024. This is particularly focused around staffing levels, including getting to levels of agency and overtime which is sustainable into 2025.

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**  
**General Manager HSE Corporate Finance**  
HSE National Finance Division  
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## Appendix 1 to PQ 36598 24

**Table 1**

<b>HSE Total Agency Staff costs for the years 2013 to 2023 and for the period January to July 2024</b>	
<i>HSE Statutory Services Only</i>	
<b>Year</b>	<b>€'000</b>
2013	212,942
2014	277,506
2015	259,297
2016	277,335
2017	301,024
2018	330,748
2019	349,447
2020	390,098
2021	568,450
2022	619,514
2023	644,212
*YTD July 2024	408,528
<i>Source : 2013 to 2023 HSE Annual Financial Statements (AFS), YTD July 2024 HSE Consolidated Financial Intelligence System (CFI)</i>	
<i>*Note : 2024 figures are draft only and are subject to change</i>	