



27 November, 2023

Mr Brian Stanley T.D.
Cathaoirleach
Committee of Public Accounts
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Your Ref: S1444 PAC33

Dear Deputy Stanley,

I refer to your letter dated 24th October 2023 expressing the Committee's concern over Children's Health Ireland's reliance on agency staff and requesting information on the steps being taken to reduce this reliance in advance of the opening of the New Children's Hospital. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your query.

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) governs the provision of health services to children and young people at Crumlin, Temple Street, Tallaght and Connolly hospitals and will provide services in the New Children's Hospital once it opens. CHI manages and delivers these services on behalf of the Health Service Executive (HSE) under Section 38 of the Health Act 2004. Services are provided in accordance with a HSE Service Level Agreement.

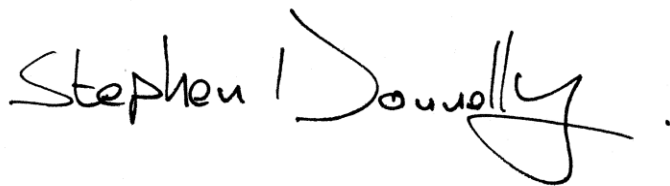
The Department of Health acknowledges that forecasting and control of the use of, and expenditure on, agency staff needs to be improved and has been engaging with the HSE to achieve reductions in both the current year and in planning for 2024.

The HSE has committed to significant reductions in agency expenditure in 2023 and 2024 through introduction of enhanced control measures, improved agency frameworks, and conversion of agency staff. In October, the HSE put in place an immediate cessation on the recruitment of additional agency staffing above today's levels. This applies to HSE Statutory Services, Voluntary Hospitals and Voluntary Agencies. Additionally, HSE Statutory Services and Voluntary Hospitals have been requested to prioritise new staff appointments to agency conversion, implement safer staffing, where applicable, which will assist in reducing agency costs and reduce absenteeism to target levels to reduce reliance on agency staff to fill short term vacancies.

The purpose of the actions noted above is to reduce the reliance on agency staff across the entire system and is part of the recruitment pause on all Grades that have grown beyond their recruitment targets for 2023 announced by the HSE CEO on 13th October. This is an extension of the pause on the recruitment of new and replacement staff in all grades in the Management and Administration category announced a number of weeks ago. The recruitment pause will exclude Consultant appointments, Graduate Nurses and Midwives and Doctors in formal approved training programmes, as these categories have not exceeded their recruitment targets for 2023.

I trust this information answers your queries.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Donnelly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S' and a long, sweeping underline.

Stephen Donnelly T.D.

Minister for Health