

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 30th NOVEMBER 2020**

Question

Further to the information provided in response to Written Question 432/2020, will the Minister –

- (a) publish the monthly totals of vacancies for the 5 staff groups from January 2019 to September 2020;
- (b) explain the increase in nursing vacancies between August 2019 and August 2020;
- (c) provide a breakdown of the jobs within the manual workers group, together with an explanation for the increase in vacancies between August 2019 and August 2020;
- (d) advise Members whether, in light of the 16 percent vacancy rate for nurses, any previously-delivered services have been reduced or cut and whether the NICE guidelines on safe staff-to-patient ratios for wards are still being met in all circumstances; and
- (e) provide details of the amount of monies (if any) saved from the non-payment of salaries for the vacant posts in 2019 that was allocated to –
 - (i) increased pay for agency or locum posts;
 - (ii) a return to centrally-held Treasury funds; or
 - (iii) other services within the Department of Health and Community identified as underfunded?

Answer

(a)

I regret that in the time available, it has not been possible to extract all the data required from the database. The data requested will be provided as soon as possible.

(b)

The number of nursing vacancies increased because of a number of factors including:

- Increased investment in mental health services through the Government Plan
- Staff appointed earlier in the year being unable to commence employment due to Covid travel restrictions
- Post- lockdown, many staff returned to the UK to be closer to family
- A number of staff due to retire this year brought forward their retirement date.

We are currently actively recruiting and have some 40 vacancies. In addition to these, there are 25.5 staff who have been appointed but who are awaiting clearances and 10 post-qualifying nurses who are due to commence employment in January 2021.

(c)

In fact, there was not an increase in manual worker vacancies. The data reported previously was incorrect and erroneously included Covid-related posts, which are all zero-hour posts, and therefore do not count toward the vacancy rate.

There are 17 vacancies in this staff group as of 27th November 2020, made up of 7 x domestics; 3 x Porters; 1 x Stores; 2 x Catering; 4 x Estates.

(d)

By utilising the flexibility in our workforce provided by bank staff (and agency workers covering vacancies), we have met all safe staff ratios and have not reduced any services.

(e)

(i)

An estimate, for each staff group, of the additional annual cost, in real terms, of using locum or agency workers over substantive employees of the Department:

2019 January 2019 to December 2019

All HCS Staff	Staff Group	Additional cost of agency staffing £000's
		(over)/under
	Allied Health Professionals	159
	Civil Servants	(1,502)
	Manual Workers	405
	Medical Staffing	(3,041)
	Nursing & Midwifery	135
	Grand Total	(3,843)

2020 January 2020 to October 2020

All HCS Staff	Staff Group	Additional cost of agency staffing £000's
		(over)/under
	Allied Health Professionals	(1,259)
	Civil Servants	(1,006)
	Manual Workers	193
	Medical Staffing	(3,450)
	Nursing & Midwifery	(1,709)
	Grand Total	(7,232)

(ii)

No monies from vacant posts are returned to centrally-held Treasury funds. Any underspends due to vacancies are used to offset the spend on agency staff as shown in the attached table. This agency spend occurs due to the vacancies.

(iii)

The underspend on vacancies is not used to support underfunded services but, as described in ii), is used to offset the cost of agency spend.