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10th December, 2018

Deputy John Curran, TD
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 48316/18

To ask the Minister for Health the number of carers in the employment of the HSE in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in each CHO area; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

-John Curran

Dear Deputy Curran,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following Parliamentary Question, which was submitted to this Department for response.

The HSE provides the vast majority of its home support services through directly employed staff, to a lesser extent through arrangements with voluntary (not for profit) providers mainly in the Greater Dublin Area, Wicklow and Clare (where HSE direct home help service provision was never a feature) with some provision through tendered arrangements with voluntary (not for profit) and private (for profit) providers. The type of support that is provided includes personal care and, where appropriate, essential household duties relating to the client's needs.

Home Support workers who are directly employed by the HSE have traditionally been, and remain, mainly part-time workers due to the nature and flexibility of the work involved and the care needs of clients that must be attended to within specific time frames during any day.

In April 2014, following a Labour Court Recommendation, the HSE implemented new contracts for its directly employed home help staff which had been agreed with SIPTU. These contracts provided each home help with a guaranteed minimum number of hours per week and a guaranteed income each week with actual work assignments managed in a reasonable way to meet the needs of clients over the course of 12 months. This new contract was regarded by staff, unions and management as a positive development for HSE employed home helps.

In 2017 the HSE engaged with SIPTU at WRC Conciliation in line with the 2014 Home Help Agreement to review current home help staff contracts to ensure that contracted arrangements reflect the needs of the service, to maximise contracted hours for HSE directly employed staff and to take further steps towards professionalising the Home Support Service.

The agreement, under the auspices of the WRC will provide for:-

- An increase in contracted hours for over 90% of home support staff if they choose to accept the HSE offers
- A change of title from Home Help Worker to Health Care Support Assistant to better reflect the nature of the services being provided
- The introduction of rostered arrangements to give staff greater certainty regarding their hours of attendance with travel time factored into these arrangements
- Assignment of work bases
- A requirement that all new Home Help staff should possess, on recruitment, the minimum qualification equivalent to a relevant QQI approved major award at Level 5 or higher

The parties are collectively working to enhance the Home Support Service, whilst acknowledging the very positive aspects of the current service. These revised arrangements will contribute positively in improving the experience of service users in terms of consistency and responsiveness of service

The number of persons employed as Health Care Support Assistants (formerly Home Helps) by the HSE at the end of each of the years 2015 to 2017 and in September 2018 is outlined below. The Table provides headcount and not whole time equivalents.

CHO	Dec-15	Dec-16	Dec-17	Sept-18
CHO 1	943	927	889	842
CHO 2	783	749	705	679
CHO 3	580	537	508	483
CHO 4	2,252	2,066	2,004	1,925
CHO 5	1,248	1,195	1,119	1,160
CHO 7	427	403	372	343
CHO 8	884	809	745	744
Nationally	7,117	6,686	6,342	6,176

The overall home support resource and the range of providers, including HSE directly employed staff, is carefully managed to ensure that this key service is available at the required times, in a flexible way and at the appropriate standard to support clients' changing assessed needs.

The Department is currently engaged in a detailed process to determine what type of home care scheme is best for Ireland. This process will consider the future design of both the funding and regulation systems for these crucial services.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Walsh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

David Walsh,
National Director Community Operations