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18th December 2019

Deputy Stephen Donnelly,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 52250/19 - To ask the Minister for Health the number of community healthcare organisations which have established waiting lists for homecare on a standardised basis

-Stephen Donnelly

Dear Deputy Donnelly,

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

Home Support Services are an important component of the provision of service to older people with assessed needs and to support them in their choice of living in their own home and community. The HSE, working within its available resources, has sought to maintain and when possible to expand the range and volume of services available to support people to remain in their own homes, to prevent early admission to long term residential care and to support people to return to their homes following an acute hospital admission. The Home Support resource is used to its maximum effect as part of each individual recipient's care plan.

The 2019 National Service Plan 2019 provides for the following;

- 17.9m home support hours to be delivered to 53,000 people inclusive of 410,000 hours/550 home support packages funded under the Winter Initiative 2018/2019
- Intensive Home Care Packages delivered to approximately 235 people with approximately 360,000 hours delivered in the full year

Home support services for older people are provided either by directly employed home support staff or by voluntary and private providers who have formal arrangements with the HSE to deliver the services. The type of support provided includes personal care and, where appropriate, essential household duties relating to the client's assessed needs.

The demand for the Home Support Services continues to grow as the population of older people expands and as an increased number older people with complex care needs are maintained at home. While the resources available are substantial, and every effort is being made to provide people with the services at the times and on the days they are required, the resources are nonetheless finite. Clients are prioritised for service provision dependent on their individual assessed needs.

The number of people in receipt of home support at any time will vary having regard to the value of the individual home supports approved and as clients cease and new clients with different value home support are approved and commenced. As at 31st October, there were 51,404 people in receipt of home support.

As of the same date, there were 7,881 people nationally, across all Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) waiting to commence their home support service, 2,379 of which are already in receipt of their service but require additional support. The numbers on the waiting list reflect a point in time and those people who are on the waiting list are reviewed, as funding becomes available, to ensure that individual cases continue to be dealt with on a priority basis within the available resource and as determined by local front line staff who know and understand the clients' needs

In Q4 2019, the Department allocated additional funding of €2m to address the growing demands on the home support service, as part of the Winter Initiative 2019/2020. Part of this funding was ring-fenced to help reduce the Home Support community waiting list figures by 600 clients by end December 2019. These additional home support packages are currently being allocated across the CHOs.

The HSE is currently implementing a single approach across the system in order to streamline services, and their delivery, to make the Home Support Service easier to understand and to reduce the complexity of the application process for clients. The National Guidelines & Procedures for Standardised Implementation of the Home Support Service 2018 provides guidance and procedures to each of the CHOs on operating the service, including the management of waiting lists. These guidelines are available for download at the following link: - <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/olderpeople/service-arrangement-documents.html>

The Department is currently engaged in a detailed process to develop a new stand-alone, statutory scheme for the financing and regulation of home support services. Developing a new statutory scheme will be an important step in ensuring that the system operates in a consistent and fair manner for all those who need home support services. The Sláintecare Implementation Strategy commits to the introduction of the new scheme in 2021.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



David Walsh,
National Director,
Community Operations