

20th December 2019

Deputy Pat Buckley,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ 53234/19

“To ask the Minister for Health the steps he will take to support an association (details supplied) to ensure the continuation of its living assistance service in County Cork indefinitely and to dispel rumours that the service may be coming to an end in 2020.”

Details supplied: The Irish Wheelchair Association

Dear Deputy Buckley,

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

The Assisted Living Service (ALS) is a service provided by the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) and in Cork is accessed through the Home Support Office. I can confirm Disability Services and the Home Support Office have not received any communication from the IWA about a reduction of this service.

Outlined below for you is an overview of the IWA and the services it provides the HSE on a national level:

Assisted Living Services

The HSE provides a range of assisted living services including Personal Assistant (PA) and Home Support services to support individuals to maximise their capacity to live full and independent lives. These are related but separate services and each is funded separately. While the resources for the provision of assisted living services available are substantial they are finite.

PA and Home Support Services are provided either directly by the HSE or through a range of voluntary service providers. The majority of specialised disability provision (80%) is delivered through non-statutory sector service providers.

PA Services

The role of a Personal Assistant (PA) is to assist a person with a disability to maximise their independence through supporting them to live in integrated settings and to access community facilities. The PA works on a one to one basis, in the home and /or in the community, with a person with a physical or sensory disability. A vital element of this personalised support is the full involvement of the individual (service user) in planning and agreeing the type and the times when support is provided to them; supporting independent living must enhance the person's control over their own life.

The average number of PA hours per person is currently approximately 12 per week. However within that there are variations of service level which reflect the requirements of service users.

Home Support Services

The Home Support service provides domestic and or personal care inputs at regular intervals on a weekly basis. Temporary relief is offered to the carer by providing a trained reliable care attendant to look after the needs of the person with the disability. The service provides support to the parents to enable them to spend quality time with the other siblings in the family: it also supports the individual with the disability in terms of their care plan with particular attention in the personal needs of the individual. Home supports can be provided through a dedicated home support service or through the generic home help service. Home supports can be an alternative to residential care, where support to individuals in daily living can avoid the need for full time residential services.

The average number of Home Support hours per person is approximately 7.5 hours per week, again within that there are variations of service level which reflect the requirements of service users.

Accessing Services

Services are accessed through an application process or through referrals from public health nurses or other community based staff. Individual's needs are evaluated against the criteria for prioritisation for the particular services and then decisions are made in relation to the allocation of resources. Resource allocation is determined by the needs of the individual, compliance with prioritisation criteria, and the level of resources available. As with every service there is not a limitless resource available for the provision of home support services and while the resources available are substantial they are finite. In this context, services are discretionary and the number of hours granted is determined by other support services already provided to the person/family.

The HSE is committed to protecting the level of Personal Assistant (PA) and Home Support Services available to persons with disabilities. The table below provides data for PA & Home Support Services delivered to people with a disability in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. The HSE has consistently, year on year, increased the number of hours of PA and Home Support Services delivered to people with a disability. In the 2020 National Service Plan, the HSE's priority is continue to deliver high quality PA and Home Support to approximately 10,000 people with disabilities including 1.67 million PA hours and 3.08 million Home Support hours.

In addition, the HSE will deliver 144 intensive transitional support packages for children and young people with complex / high support needs focusing on families experiencing substantial levels of support need, but who do not require a high cost long term placement. Specifically, this new development initiative is the pre-crisis intervention stage and will include:

- intensive in-home visiting supports
- planned residential respite interventions
- specialist behavioural support interventions
- access to planned extended day / weekend and summer day based activities

Figures for PA and Home Support Services Delivered to People with a Disability

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
PA Services – Number of Hours	1,291,070	1,335,759	1,482,492	1,510,116	1,516,727	1,639,481
PA Services –No. People availing of service	2,057	2,224	2,369	2,427	2,470	2,535
Home Support – Number of Hours	2,568,180	2,612,263	2,777,552	2,928,914	2,930,000	3,176,796



Home Support – No. People availing of service	7,892	7,312	7,219	7,323	7,492	7,522
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The need for increased services is acknowledged and the HSE continues to work with agencies to explore various ways of responding to this need in line with the budget available.

I trust this clarifies the situation for you.

Yours sincerely,



Ms. Jackie Daly,
General Manager Cork South & Kerry Disability Services,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare

