



Oifig an Cheannasaí Feabhsúcháin Seirbhíse - Oibríochtaí

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Services for Older People

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15<sup>th</sup> July 2019

**Deputy Brendan Smith,  
Dáil Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.**

**Dear Deputy Smith,**

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.

**PQ ref 28143/19**

**To ask the Minister for Health this plans to ensure that more home supports are provided through direct employment by the HSE rather than through agencies or private companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

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.

Home Support services for older people, funded by the HSE, are provided either by directly employed staff or by voluntary and private providers who have formal tender arrangements with the HSE to deliver the services. The HSE directly employs home support staff in all areas outside of the Dublin/Wicklow area (CHO 6, CHO 9 and parts of CHO 7) and County Clare. The type of support provided includes personal care and, where appropriate, essential household duties relating to the client's assessed needs

Home support staff 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. The HSE keeps under review the position regarding the number of staff employed having regard to the hours available and the hours worked by existing staff in the local area.

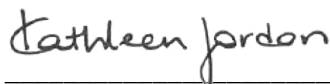
As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 (available data), there were 6,036 Health Care Support Assistants (HCSAs) directly employed by the HSE. The HSE and unions have been engaged over the last number of years in a comprehensive negotiation process, under the auspices of the Labour Court and Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), and in line with the Public Service Agreement, with a view to implementing an overall package of measures to improve the service for our service users and for the staff delivering those services.

HSE directly employed home support staff contracts were reviewed in 2014 under the auspices of the Labour Court at which time improved terms, including minimum weekly hours were implemented. In keeping with that Agreement, contracts were again reviewed in 2017, on this occasion under the auspices of the WRC, and with these revised arrangements 90% of HSE staff were offered increased weekly contracted hours. This review also provided for a change in title to Health Care Support Assistant (HCSA), assignment of work based and the introduction of rostered arrangements. The 2017/2018 WRC Agreement continues the HSE's commitment to maximise contracted hours for HSE directly employed home helps and to take further steps towards professionalising the Home Support Service.

In relation to the use of private providers, the HSE has committed to the direct employment of home support staff to maximum effect for those with the appropriate skill set. However, it should be noted that private providers are part of the landscape for home support provision and will continue to be used, not least for the choice of care which they allow to the user of the service.

In that regard, following a tender process in 2018, each of the nine Community Health Organisations across the country have a number of Approved Providers available to provide a Home Support service to clients locally where the HSE is not in a position to provide the service directly. The new tender arrangements apply to new clients whose Home Support is approved from the 1st of September 2018. Arrangements for existing clients receiving Home Support are not affected.

Yours sincerely,



On behalf of:

**Sandra Tuohy**  
**Assistant National Director – Operations**  
**Services for Older People**