



Oifig an Cheannasaí Oibríochtaí & Feabhsúcháin Seirbhíse
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4th July 2019

Deputy Denis Naughton
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Naughton,

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 25864/19

To ask the Minister for Health if he will report on the meeting between the Minister of State with special responsibility for Mental Health and Older People and HSE CHO managers on the delivery of home help hours; if the 18.3 million home support hours committed to in the service plan will be delivered in 2019; the cost of compliance with a decision (details supplied); 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 Service is funded by Government to deliver a volume of service each year as approved in the HSE National Service Plan. It is a non-statutory service and access to the current service is based on assessment of the person's needs by the HSE, having regard to the available resources and the competing demands for the services from those people with assessed needs. Home Support services for older people, 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 type of support provided includes personal care and, where appropriate, essential household duties relating to the client's assessed needs.

The 2019 National Service Plan 2019 provides for;

- 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

Funding for home support has a defined budget as set out above in the National Service Plan. The overall allocation for home support has seen a significant increase of almost €140m in the period 2015 to 2019.

In 2015, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) (TYCO Case) ruled that where workers do not have a fixed place of work, the time they spend travelling between their home and their first and last customers each day counts as working time.



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Under the principle of *direct effect*, the ECJ ruling applies to the public sector. HCSAs in the public sector who did not have a fixed place of work could count travel time between home and first and last clients as working time. The revised contract arising from the WRC agreement 2017/2018 provided for the assignment of a base for each staff member and in this way addressed the ECJ specific issue regarding travel time between home/first client & travel time between last client/home.

The HSE also needed to be cognisant that time spent travelling between clients also constitutes 'working time'. The WRC Agreement also provided for a change of title to Health Care Support Assistant and the introduction of rostered arrangements on a 5/7 basis, to give staff greater certainty regarding their hours of attendance with travel time factored into these arrangements.

Of the approximate €29m in additional funding allocated in 2019 a total of €10m relates to Winter Initiative with the balance relating to ELS costs, and a significant portion of the this funding is available to address the cost implications of the revised contract for HCSAs. The HSE is currently in the process of implementing all aspects of the WRC Agreement.

The level of activity and associated costs in relation to home support is monitored on an on-going basis by the Chief Officers across their CHOs and with the Head of Operations Services for Older People nationally to ensure that those with the greatest needs are supported and that the overall expenditure on home support services by the HSE does not exceed the available funding.

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.

- This is a key action under the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy and will improve access to home support services.
- It will also help to improve access to the home support services that people need in an affordable and sustainable way.
- The system of regulation for home support will help to ensure that the public can be confident that the services provided are of a high standard.
- The Sláintecare Action Plan 2019 also sets out a very significant programme of work aimed out developing and improving health and social care generally, with a significant emphasis on increased community-based supports.

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.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra Tuohy".

Sandra Tuohy
Assistant National Director – Operations
Services for Older People