



Oifig an Cheannasaí Oibríochtaí & Feabhsúcháin Seirbhíse  
Seirbhísí do Dhaoine Scothaosta  
Tel: 061 483245  
Email: olderpeople.operations@hse.ie

Office of the Assistant National Director - Operations  
Services for Older People  
Tel: 061 483245  
Email: olderpeople.operations@hse.ie

29 May 2019

Deputy Brian Stanley, TD  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Stanley,

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 21225/19**

**To ask the Minister for Health the position regarding home help cover for elderly persons when the regular home help is on annual leave; if home help cover is provided in these circumstances; and if there are variations between counties in relation to same in view of the fact that some persons are being left without cover in areas of County Laois.**

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 HSE provides the vast majority of its home support services through directly employed home support staff, to a lesser extent through arrangements with voluntary (not 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 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 home support service which people receive is based on an individual client's care needs which are assessed by clinical staff and the home support provided will vary dependent on the level of dependency and other support structures in place such as attendance at day care.

The HSE, at all times, endeavours to provide cover for staff on annual leave with staff providing cross-cover when required and clients with the highest care needs or living alone prioritised for cover during periods of leave. Clients and their families are kept informed in relation to planned staff leave. In exceptional circumstances where cross-cover is not available to a home support client during a period of annual leave, respite services are offered to the client.

The HSE continues to actively recruit staff as required and acknowledges the valuable contribution that our home help staff make in the high level of care provided to our clients and the positive impact the home support service has on enabling older people to remain living in their own homes and communities.

The overall home care 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.

Yours sincerely,

*Sandra Tuohy*

---

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