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26th November 2019

Deputy Anne Rabbitte, TD
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Rabbitte,

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 46222/19

To ask the Minister for Health the provision of home help hours has been curtailed in some counties to an embargo on the use of external agencies; if so, when the embargo came into place; when it will be lifted; 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.

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 and having regard to the available resources and the competing demands for the services from those people with assessed needs. There has been a significant increase in the funding available for the provision of home support services in recent years; an increase of circa €110m since 2015.

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

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 end August 11,572,809 home support hours were delivered nationally to 51,588 people.

To the end of August, 284,952 more hours were delivered when compared to the same period last year, reflecting an increase in service delivery throughout 2019. Also, as of this date, 10,490 new clients commenced a home support service.

The HSE recently launched its Winter Plan 2019/2020. A funding allocation of €26m has been provided on a once-off basis in Q4 2019 to support the HSE's plans to manage the known increase in demand that our health service will experience over the winter months.

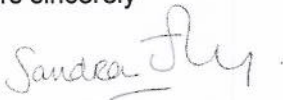
One of the key priorities for this additional resource is to facilitate a reduction in the Delayed Transfers of Care (DTC) by supporting the NHSS, Transitional Care and Home Supports. €2m of the funding has been allocated for the provision of an additional 1,110 Home Support Packages to support Delayed Transfers of Care & the Community Waiting List with 600 home support packages allocated across the CHOs to deal specifically with clients assessed and waiting for funding for home support.

There is a requirement to ensure that the level of service provision, including services provided by the External Providers, is in line with the available funding per the National Service Plan and the overall home care resource 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.

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 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.

Yours sincerely



Sandra Tuohy
Assistant National Director
Older Persons Services – Operations