



Oifig an Cheannasaí Oibríochtaí & Feabhsúcháin Seirbhíse  
Seirbhísí do Dhaoine Scothaosta  
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Office of the Assistant National Director - Operations  
Services for Older People  
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18<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd,  
Dáil Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy O'Dowd,

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 40673/19**

**To ask the Minister for Health the principles and procedures applied in risk rating persons that are waiting for the provision of home support services for older people, the number of persons that have been rated high risk, medium risk and low risk since 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 by CHO area and remain on the waiting list and are not in receipt of the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

The 2019 National Service Plan 2019 provides Home Support Services for mainly older people relating to:

- 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 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019 (preliminary data) 51,588 people were in receipt of home support.

Nationally, at the end of August 2019, 7,255 people were waiting for funding for new or additional home support services (preliminary data). The numbers on the waiting list at the end of each month reflect a point in time and may fluctuate month to month dependent on various pressures such as increased demand during the winter period and prioritisation of discharges from acute hospital.

Under Winter Plan 2019/2020, funding has been made available to provide home support services to 600 clients on the Waiting List, with implementation to commence week beginning 13<sup>th</sup> October 2019 for a 12-week period to year end. The CHO areas have been made aware of their individual allocation and advised to commence allocation of services.

Those people who are on the waiting list are reviewed, as funding becomes available, to ensure that individual cases continue to be dealt with on a priority basis within the available resources and as determined by local front line staff who know and understand the clients' needs, and who undertake regular reviews of those care needs to ensure that the services being provided remain appropriate.



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While the resources for the provision of home support are substantial, they are finite. The aim is to be as responsive as possible to all applications; however, given the changing demographics and limitation of the resource, delays can occur. In this context, those clients who are assessed and approved for home support, and who are not being provided immediately with a service, are risk assessed and placed on a waiting list for a resource as it becomes available. In addition, people being discharged from acute hospitals, who are in a position to return home with supports, are prioritised. The National Guidelines & Procedures for Standardised Implementation of the Home Support Service 2018 provides guidance and procedures on operating the service including waiting list management and risk assessments. These guidelines are available for download at the following link:- <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/olderpeople/service-arrangement-documents.html>

People who are on the waiting list are reviewed, as funding becomes available, to ensure that individual cases continue to be dealt with on a priority basis within the available resources. Priority is determined by local front line staff who know and understand the clients' needs, and who undertake regular reviews of those care needs to ensure that the services being provided remain appropriate. The number taken off the list is dependent upon the numbers of persons ceasing to need the service, the value of that service becoming available for recycling; the value of the service required by the new client and on any new funding that might be allocated. Waiting times will vary as some clients are dealt with in a significantly shorter time as a priority and others may wait longer depending on individual circumstances, risk assessment and urgency of services required.

Data in the detailed format requested (i.e. the number of persons that have been rated high risk, medium risk and low risk since 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 by CHO area) is not currently collated nationally. While the information is available locally from client records, it would require considerable resources to gather this information centrally.

The HSE is in the process of implementing a standard national approach to assessment of care needs of older people. This new approach will assist over time in ensuring a more consistent approach to assessment processes and will help to ensure that waiting list data is aligned across the CHOs. As the population of older people continues to increase, the level of resources for home support services also needs to continue to grow or waiting lists will expand.

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. 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 – Operations**  
**Services for Older People**