



Oifig an Cheannasaí Feabhsúcháin Seirbhíse - Oibríochtaí
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

5th November 2019

Deputy Mary Butler,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Butler,

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 43863/19

To ask the Minister for Health if he will consider carrying out a cost based analysis in relation to the amount of homecare supports hours outsourced to private operators standing at 50% to examine whether this is value for money (details supplied).

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 type of support provided includes personal care and, where appropriate, essential household duties relating to the client's assessed needs.

The HSE has a long history of very close working relationships with providers of home support services and particularly with voluntary providers in the Greater Dublin area, Wicklow and Clare where historically there is no tradition of directly employed home support staff.

As the service expanded over the years, and as private providers entered the market, providing much needed capacity to enable more people to remain at home for longer, there was a need to put in place formal arrangements with external providers to ensure fairness and transparency in selection of service providers and, in the absence of regulation, to ensure an appropriate standard of services being delivered.

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 was approved since the 1st of September 2018. Arrangements for existing clients receiving Home Support were not affected.

As part of that process, interested providers were required to demonstrate their capacity to deliver care across specific geographical areas which were divided into lots, and to meet an agreed set of quality criteria. Those who could demonstrate this capacity and who also met the pricing criteria, were approved. In order to be on the provider list for HSE funding to provide home support for new home support clients, the provider must have been approved to provide the service for new support packages commencing after 1st September 2018.

Voluntary and Private Providers have been engaged with HSE since 2011 in the national tendering process and since 2014 with working towards the streamlining of home support services. This work culminated in home help services and the home care packages scheme being brought together into a single funded service in 2018 in agreement with the Department of Health, in preparation for the planned introduction of a home support scheme and regulation of the home support sector.

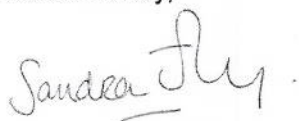
As at 30th June 2019 (available data), there were 6,046 Health Care Support Assistants (HCSAs) directly employed by the HSE. Home support staff who are directly employed by the HSE have traditionally been, and remain, mainly part-time workers due to the nature and flexibility of the work involved and 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 and acknowledges the valuable contribution that our home support 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 HSE also continues to actively recruit Health Care Support Assistants to further aid in the delivery of directly provided care.

Preliminary data (August 2019 YTD) shows that a total of 11,572,809 home support hours have been provided nationally, of which 5,120,568 hours were delivered directly while 6,452,241 hours were delivered by external providers.

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