



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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11th December 2020

Deputy Joe Carey
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
e-mail: joe.carey@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Carey,

The Health Service Executive 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: 42406/20

To ask the Minister for Health his plans to introduce a personal assistance service for persons with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

The HSE already provides a range of assisted living services including Personal Assistant (PA) and Home Support Services to support individuals to maximise their capacity to live full and independent lives.

PA and Home Support Services are provided either directly by the HSE or through a range of voluntary service providers. The majority of specialised disability provision (80%) is delivered through non-statutory sector service providers.

Services are accessed through an application process or through referrals from public health nurses or other community based staff. Individuals' needs are evaluated against the criteria for prioritisation for the particular services and then decisions are made in relation to the allocation of resources. Resource allocation is determined by the needs of the individual, compliance with prioritisation criteria, and the level of resources available. As with every service there is not a limitless resource available for the provision of home support services and while the resources available are substantial they are finite. In this context, services are discretionary and the number of hours granted is determined by other support services already provided to the person/family.

COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

Prior to the public health emergency with regard to COVID-19, the HSE was committed to protecting the level of Personal Assistant (PA) and Home Support Services available to persons with disabilities. In the 2020 National Service Plan, the HSE's priority was continue to deliver high quality PA and Home Support to approximately 10,000 people with disabilities including 1.67 million PA hours and 3.08 million Home Support hours.

The number of people in receipt of PA and Home Support services has remained steady throughout the pandemic. The number of PA hours provided up to end September 2020 (Q3) has exceeded the expected

target as a result of additional PA hours being provided in lieu of other services and is on schedule to deliver NSP levels of service by year end. Home Support Services are slightly down on target to date, but not excessively so given the complexity involved in the provision of services due to COVID-19.

In order to support Personal Assistants (PAs) during the pandemic, the HSE Disability Operations Quality Improvement Office developed infection, prevention and control bespoke guidance for PAs. This was developed in collaboration with Leaders, Personal Assistants and Service Providers and was agreed with the Health Surveillance Protection Centre (HSPC) and was published on the Partner Resources Page on the HSE website under the tab 'HSE Approved Guidance for Disability Services' at:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources>

Roadmap for Reopening

In the context of the Governments Resilience & Recovery Framework (2020 – 2021), the HSE regards the provision of disability services as essential to maintaining a response to people with a disability. All disability services must follow public health guidance in this area, including the prevention and management of COVID-19 related infection. The HSE and its funded disability partners will continue to provide PA and Home Support in line with public health guidance and direction and having regard to the availability of staffing resources.

Reference is drawn to the following HSE weblink which provides updates and guidance for disability service providers, including 'service resumption planning guidance'.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/>

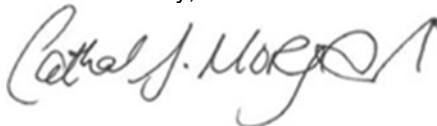
Attention is also drawn to the following important web links which provides up to date information resources in respect of covid.

www.hspc.ie

<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/>

The HSE and Service Providers recognise the critical need and importance of disability supports for people and their families. The impact of COVID-19 on people's lives has and continues to be very significant. Our collective aim is to restore services in a safe way and in line with the very significant investment made by the State and funded agencies and we will continue to work with service users and their families/carers to ensure that we achieve this aim.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr. Cathal Morgan,
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations**