



7 August 2020

Deputy Bernard J Durkan,  
Dáil Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Durkan,

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: 21066/20**

**To ask the Minister for Health the extent to which homecare packages are likely to be enhanced to ensure best possible treatment for vulnerable age groups throughout the winter months; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

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.

The 2020 National Service Plan provides for;

- 18.9m home support hours to be delivered to 53,700 people inclusive of 770,000 hours/2,210 home support packages funded under the Winter Initiative 2019/2020, and 230,000 hours relating to the Home Support Pilot Scheme to commence in 2020
- Intensive Home Care Packages delivered to approximately 235 people with approximately 360,000 hours delivered in the full year

Despite the significant level of service provision, the demand for Home Support continues to grow as the population aged over 65 years' increases. All those waiting are assessed and provided with a service, if appropriate, as soon as possible having regard to their assessed needs. In addition, people being discharged from acute hospitals, who are in a position to return home with supports, are prioritised.

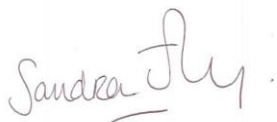
The spread of COVID-19 throughout our communities has posed significant challenges for many areas of our Older Person's Services, including Home Support Services and as the country moves through the phases of the easing of Government restrictions, the HSE continues to work closely with providers and community staff to identify where service is most required. This is to ensure, insofar as possible, that Home Support Services can continue where needed most. The requirements of physical distancing must be encouraged, supported and maintained so as to keep our staff and service users safe and prevent any further spread of the virus.

Winter Preparedness for the upcoming winter season 2020/21 and plans for same are currently underway, with finalised plans expected before the commencement of Q4-2020. Any plans for same will need to consider the impact of the current public health crisis and the potential of a second surge of COVID-19.

Notwithstanding this, funding has been secured as part of the 2019/20 Winter Plan, which provides for an additional 520 Home Support Packages, to be phased in over the period October to December 2020. One of the key priorities of the 2019/2020 Winter Plan is to facilitate a reduction in the Delayed Transfers of Care (DTC) by supporting the NHSS, Transitional Care and Home Supports.

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.

Yours sincerely,



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