



**20 October 2020**

**Deputy Mattie McGrath,  
Dáil Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.**

**Dear Deputy McGrath,**

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: 28535/20**

**To ask the Minister for Health the number of home helps that have retired from the HSE since 2008; the number of new home helps that have been employed in the same period; 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 HSE provides its home support services through directly employed home support staff, and arrangements with voluntary (not-for-profit) providers and private (for-profit) through tender and service level arrangements. The type of support that is provided includes personal care and, where appropriate, essential household duties relating to the client's needs. The HSE continues to actively recruit staff as required, and at present there are several campaigns underway locally throughout the country to recruit additional Healthcare Support Assistants with a view to increasing the current staff level of 5,496 (headcount figure correct as at August 2020).

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 home support service which people receive is based on an individual client's care needs which are assessed by clinical staff and the home support provided will vary dependent on the level of dependency and other support structures in place such as attendance at day care.

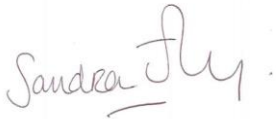
The overall home care resource and the range of providers, including HSE directly employed staff, is carefully managed to ensure that this key service is available at the required times, in a flexible way and at the appropriate standard to support clients' changing assessed needs.

Health Care Support Assistants which are published on the HSE Employment Reports, refers to the grade Health Care Support Assistant (formerly known as Home Helps). Please see *Appendix 1* below which shows the Homehelp/Healthcare Support Assistant staffing levels since 2008 – Please note that the data contained therein does not include staff working in a capacity to support Home Help Services and is therefore not deemed to represent a total figure for the grade Health Care Support Assistant. In relation to your query regarding staff retirements, we do not currently collate same. While this information may be available locally, it would take considerable resources to collate same nationally.

As the country moves into the parameters of the new “*Roadmap for Living with Covid*”, 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.

Furthermore, the HSE acknowledges the valuable role of carers and families, home support workers and providers across the services in supporting older people and their care groups throughout this challenging period.

Yours sincerely,



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

## Appendix 1 – Homehelp / Healthcare Support Assistant Staff – 2008 to 2020 (August YTD)

### HSE Direct - Homehelp / Health Care Support Assistants

Health Care Support Assistants (formerly Home Helps) Community Healthcare Organisation	WTE / Headcount	Dec-08	Dec-09	Dec-10	Dec-11	Dec-12	Dec-13	Dec-14	Dec-15	Dec-16	Dec-17	Dec-18	Dec-19	Aug-20
Total Directly Employed Home Helps / HCSAs	WTE	4,788	4,311	4,234	4,245	3,746	3,621	3,703	3,390	3,173	3,502	3,552	3,653	3,472
Total Directly Employed Home Helps / HCSAs	Headcount	11,780	10,614	9,916	9,235	9,095	8,389	7,663	7,117	6,686	6,342	6,134	5,814	5,496