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**22 September 2020**

**Deputy David Cullinane, TD**

**Dáil Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.**

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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 21127/20**

**To ask the Minister for Health the number of home help hours offered in 2019 and to date in 2020; the estimated full-year number in 2020; the estimated cost of the measure; the number of persons waiting for homecare supports; the estimated cost of clearing the backlog; the ongoing cost of maintaining the service at this level; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

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 in 2020
- Intensive Home Care Packages delivered to approximately 235 people with approximately 360,000 hours delivered in the full year

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.

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. At present, the CHOs are in the process of restoring home support services. In order to maximise the capacity available, consideration has to be given to balancing delivery of service against suspended clients, clients assessed and waiting on commencement of home support services and the continued requirement to meet the needs of higher priority clients currently in receipt of services.

Preliminary data currently available reflects the period to the end of July 2020. As of this date, 9,858,538 home support hours were delivered nationally to 51,571 people. Also, as of this date, there were 4,550 people waiting for funding for new or additional home support. It is estimated that in order to clear the current home support waiting list and to address those assessed and waiting for funding for home support, based on the average of 6.5hrs of home support per client per week, the estimated cost to year end 2020 would be in the region of €11.4m with a full year cost in region of €39m.

In relation to your query regarding home support activity levels for 2019, as at 31 December 2019, 17,484,366 home support hours were delivered nationally to 51,345 people. Also, as of this date, there were 7,819 people waiting for funding for new or additional home support. The number of those on the waiting list has significantly reduced in Q1 and Q2 of 2020, primarily as a direct result of the ongoing public health emergency and a range of measures introduced by Government and the HSE to protect the health of vulnerable older persons.

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.

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



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