



29 September 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 Ref: 24093/20

To ask the Minister for Health the extent to which he plans to improve facilities and staff numbers available for homecare; 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 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

The HSE provides the vast majority of its home support services through directly employed home support staff, and to a lesser extent through arrangements with voluntary (not for profit) providers. 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 many campaigns underway locally throughout the country to recruit additional Healthcare Support Assistants with a view to increasing the current staff level of 5,706 (figure correct as at April 2020).

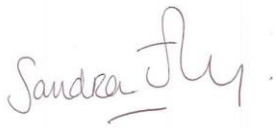
Home support staff who are directly employed by the HSE, have traditionally been, and remain, mainly part-time workers due to the nature and flexibility of the work involved and the care needs of clients that must be attended to within specific time frames during any day. The home support service which 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.

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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra Tuohy".

Sandra Tuohy
Assistant National Director – Operations
Services for Older People