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**13 October 2020**

**Deputy Danny Healy-Rae, TD**  
**Dáil Eireann,**  
**Leinster House,**  
**Kildare Street,**  
**Dublin 2.**

Dear Deputy Healy-Rae,

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 27117/20**

**To ask the Minister for Health if extra funding will be made available for home help to ensure that elderly persons can remain in their own homes for as long as possible.**

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, now deferred to 2021
- 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, and its importance as an alternative service to long stay care, has grown considerably over the past number of years. Similarly, the type of Home Support that is now required to meet the needs of the population is a more person-centred personal care model. Notwithstanding this, 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.

Preliminary data currently available reflects the period to the end of August 2020. As of this date, 11,279,185 home support hours were delivered nationally to 51,945 people. Also, as of this date, there were 4,030 people waiting for funding for new or additional home support.

Winter preparedness for the upcoming season 2020/21 has been finalised and the comprehensive recent publication in respect of same (HSE Winter Plan 2020/21) is available here;

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/winter-planning-within-the-covid19-pandemic-october-2020-april-2021.pdf>

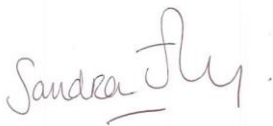
The Department of Health has allocated a substantial package in respect of the above, amounting to €600m. In relation to Home Support and giving consideration to the on-going pandemic and the recent surge in COVID-19 cases nationally, maintaining people in their own homes is now an essential focus of the Winter Plan 2020/21 so as to protect their health throughout the winter period whilst also minimising acute hospital admissions insofar as possible. In light of this, an additional 4.7m home support hours have been approved as part of the Winter Plan.

In addition to the above, funding was also secured as part of the 2019/20 Winter Plan, which provided for an additional 520 Home Support Packages, currently being phased in over the period October to December 2020.

As the country moves through 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.

Yours sincerely



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