



23rd December 2021

**Deputy Michael 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 21/61012

To ask the Minister for Health the amount his Department is paying agencies to pay private homecare assistants; 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 National Service Plan for 2021 provides for the following: -

- 23.67m home support hours to be delivered to 55,675 people by year end, inclusive of an additional 5m hours funded under the Winter Plan 2020/2021
- 230,000 hours to be delivered as part of the Home Support Pilot Scheme to commence in 2021 and
- 360,000 home support hours provided to 235 people under the Intensive Home Support Scheme

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.

Preliminary activity data currently available reflects the period to end of November 2021. As of this date, 18,667,927 Home Support hours were delivered nationally to 55,121 people, while 19,937 new Home Support clients have benefitted from the service. Overall service delivery in terms of hours delivered has increased by 15% based on activity levels for the same period last year.

Home Support services for older people are provided either by directly employed staff or by voluntary and private providers who have formal tender arrangements with the HSE to deliver the services. The type of support provided includes personal care and, where appropriate, essential household duties relating to the client's assessed needs.

The HSE is committed to the direct employment of home support staff for those with the appropriate skill set. However, private providers are part of the landscape for home support provision and will continue to be used, not least for the choice of care which they allow to the user of the service.

In that regard, following a tender process in 2018, each of the nine Community Health Organisations across the country have a number of Approved Providers available to provide a Home Support service to clients locally where the HSE is not in a position to provide the service directly. External providers operate subject to tender arrangements with the HSE and are paid in accordance with agreed tender rates, which may vary from provider to provider. The current tender has been extended for a further 12-month period to end December 2022.

The terms and conditions of Home Support Workers employed by the Approved Providers are a matter for each employer, including salaries for each member of staff employed. The operation of the tender is detailed in the Tender 2018 Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) available at the following web-link:-

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/olderpeople/service-arrangement-documents.html>

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,



Sandra Tuohy
Assistant National Director
Community Operations
Services for Older People