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Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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Deputy Violet Anne Wynne
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Dear Deputy Wynne

The Health Service Executive 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 61608/21

To ask the Minister for Health the rationale used to revoking eligibility and therefore access to personal assistance services for persons over 65 years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

The HSE provides a range of assisted living services including Personal Assistant and Home Support Services to support individuals to maximise their capacity to live full and independent lives.

PA and Home Support Services are provided either directly by the HSE or through a range of voluntary service providers. The majority of specialised disability provision (80%) is delivered through non-statutory sector service providers.

Services are accessed through an application process or through referrals from public health nurses or other community based staff. Individuals' needs are evaluated against the criteria for prioritisation for the particular services and then decisions are made in relation to the allocation of resources. Resource allocation is determined by the needs of the individual, compliance with prioritisation criteria, and the level of resources available. As with every service there is not a limitless resource available for the provision of home support services and while the resources available are substantial they are finite. In this context, services are discretionary and the number of hours granted is determined by other support services already provided to the person/family.

The term personal assistance user refers to a disabled person choosing a personal assistant of their choice to aid them in everyday tasks and in negotiating environmental, transport and other social barriers. However, not all disabled people want or require personal assistance, but all disabled people including those that use or wish to use personal assistance want to exercise choice, control and self-determination over their own lives. Giving the person with disabilities control over any assistance they need to go about their daily life, despite their physical and sensory impairments.

The role of a Personal Assistant (PA) is to assist a person with a disability to maximise their independence through supporting them to live in integrated settings and to access community facilities. The PA works on a one to one basis, in the home and/or in the community, with a person with a physical or sensory disability. A vital element of this personalised support is the full involvement of the individual (service user) in planning



and agreeing the type and the times when support is provided to them, supporting independent living must enhance the person's control over their own life. Article 19 of the UN Convention states that disabled people should live where they wish and with whom they wish. That they should enjoy a range of community support services including personal assistance. That they should enjoy community life and its opportunities on an equal basis to non-disabled people and they should not be subject to isolation or segregation.

The HSE acknowledges the role of PA Services in supporting the person with a disability to realise the entitlements set out in Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). As Ireland has now ratified the UN Convention it will be necessary to have a policy on the provision of PA services with an agreed definition, criteria for accessing the service, assessment process and an indication of the level of support that can be provided.

In the normal course of service delivery, there will be ongoing reviews throughout the year to ensure that if needs change the service provided will address this change within available resources. An individual's PA hours may be adjusted following a service review where service demand can result in one individual's service being reduced in order to address priority needs of other people with disabilities within that community.

People who are over 65 years may access a range of Home care supports, which include the services of nurses, home care attendants, care assistants, home helps and the various therapists including physiotherapists and occupational therapists. This reflects the responsive nature of HSE service delivery and takes account of the changing nature of assessed need over time as individual's needs change. However, many adults with a disability who are over the age of 65 years and who began with Disability Services before turning 65, will continue to receive support from Disability Services. This is particularly prevalent in Personal Assistant services.

Yours sincerely



Bernard O'Regan
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations