



**4<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**Deputy Rose Conway Walsh TD,  
Dáil Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.**

**Dear Deputy Conway Walsh,**

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 62837/21**

**To ask the Minister for Health the number of HSE home help staff recruited in the past 12 months by county in tabular form; 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. Also, as of this date, there were 455 people waiting for funding for new or additional home support, while 4,975 people were approved for Home Support but are awaiting a carer to be assigned. It should be noted that despite capacity challenges experienced nationwide within Home Support services, overall service delivery has increased by 15% when compared to activity levels for the same period last year.

As at the end of September 2021 (latest quarterly report available) there were 5,192\* directly employed HCSAs (headcount). Please see Appendix below in relation to the number of directly employed HCSA at each quarter of 2021. Figures reported on the Appendix below are point in time and take into account both new recruits, as well as leavers from the service, nationally in each reporting period.

The HSE is aware that there are increasing capacity issues across both direct and indirect provision, and continues to advertise on an ongoing basis for Health Care Assistants (HCSAs) and recruits as many suitable candidates, where possible. The HSE conducts its recruitment through a variety of channels both at local level and through the shared service offices of HBS. Due to the nature of Healthcare Support Assistants, this recruitment is normally conducted at a very local level and is ongoing continually across the HSE in an effort to ensure availability of carers. Approved Home Support Providers also continue to recruit home support workers. Efforts are ongoing to meet the demand for home support services.

While there are sometimes delays between the approval of funding and the availability of carers to commence delivery of home support hours in certain regions, significant work is underway to address these challenges. This includes work within the Department of Health to establish a Strategic Workforce Advisory Group to include key stakeholders including the HSE to look in detail at issues of recruitment, retention, skills development, pay and conditions, and sustainable employment of home support workers into the future.

The Minister for Health, in recent days, has invited submissions from key stakeholders in order to afford organisations an opportunity to set out current workforce challenges; to gather data and evidence to support scoping the nature and extent of the issue in advance of the Department bringing the relevant stakeholders together in a structured process.

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  
Community Operations  
Services for Older People

## Appendix 1 – Directly Employed HCSAs

### HSE Direct - Health Care Support Assistants

Health Care Support Assistants (formerly Home Helps) Community Healthcare Organisation	Category	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21
Total Directly Employed Home Helps / HCSAs	WTE	3,648	3,511	3,536	3,509
Total Directly Employed Home Helps / HCSAs	Headcount	5,268	5,211	5,204	5,192

*\*Source: HSE Workforce Reporting & Intelligence*