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16 April 2021

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd, TD  
Dáil Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy O'Dowd,

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: 17390/21: "To ask the Minister for Health the number of staff directly from within his Department with responsibility for homecare services in each of the years 2019, 2020 and to date in 2021, by grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Fergus O'Dowd"**

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

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. Historically, home support services were provided in the main by voluntary providers across the Greater Dublin area, Wicklow and Clare, where there is no tradition of directly employed home support staff. As the service has expanded over the years, and as "Private Providers" entered the market, providing much needed capacity to enable more people to remain at home for longer; formal arrangements with external providers have been put in place through the tendering process. This process ensures fairness and transparency in selection of service providers and, in the absence of regulation, to ensure an appropriate standard of services being delivered.

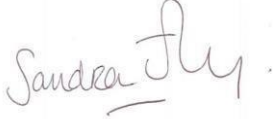
In relation to your query regarding the number of directly employed Home Support staff in the years 2019, 2020 and to date in 2021, please see table hereunder which illustrates same, the latest data available reflects the period as at end of February 2021.

<b>HSE Home Support Staff Headcount &amp; Grade Types</b>			
<b>Description</b>	<b>Dec-19</b>	<b>Dec-20</b>	<b>Feb-21</b>
Health Care Support Assistant	5,712	5,268	5,211
Home Help Co-Ordinator	90	98	102
Home Management Advisor	1	1	1
Home Help Organiser	6	3	4
Home Help Organiser Deputy	5	11	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,814</b>	<b>5,381</b>	<b>5,334</b>

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 Health Care Assistants this recruitment is normally conducted at a very local level and is on-going across the HSE to ensure availability of carers.

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. The Sláintecare Implementation Strategy commits to the introduction of the new scheme in 2021.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra Tuohy". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

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Sandra Tuohy,  
Assistant National Director - Community Operations, Services for  
Older People.

