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30 June 2021

**Deputy Ged Nash, TD
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.**

Dear Deputy Nash,

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 22649/21

To ask the Minister for Health his plans to reduce the waiting time for homecare packages; 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 number of people waiting for funding for home support services, reflect a point in time. Those people who are on the waiting list have been assessed and are reviewed, as funding becomes available, to ensure that individual cases continue to be dealt with on a priority basis within the available resources, having regard to the client's assessed needs and current Public Health advice.

As you may be aware, the HSE IT systems have been affected by a recent cyber-attack, and this has affected our electronic records, email services and data processing & collection systems. In light of this, the most recent completed data file represents the period to the end of March 2021. As of this date, 4,686,335 home support hours were delivered nationally to 54,122 people. Also, as of this date, there were 1,601 people waiting for funding for new or additional home support.

There has been a significant reduction in the number of people assessed and waiting on funding for home support throughout 2020 and into 2021 – this has been as a result of a number of factors including validation of waiting lists and availability of funding to address those waiting. Further funding to provide an additional 5m hours in 2021, as part of the Winter Plan 2020/2021, will enable the HSE to keep the number of clients assessed and waiting on funding to a minimum in addition to the provision of packages of care to support reablement and those with complex care needs in order to avoid long-term care. This will amount to a service provision of approximately 24m hours in 2021

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

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra Tuohy".

Sandra Tuohy
Assistant National Director
Services for Older People – Operations