



**Oifig an Cheannasaí Feabhsúcháin Seirbhíse - Oibríochtaí**

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**Office of the Assistant National Director - Operations**

Services for Older People

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**20<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

**Deputy Neale Richmond, TD  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.**

Dear Deputy Richmond,

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 41966/21**

**To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to recruitment issues in the homecare sector; if he is taking steps to address the issue; 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.

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.

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

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.

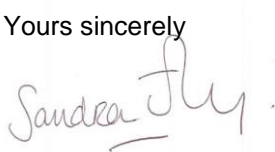
While the HSE is aware that there are capacity issues across both direct and indirect provision, it continues to advertise on an ongoing basis and recruit as many suitable candidates, where possible. The HSE conducts its recruitment through a variety of channels both at local level and through the shared service offices of HBS.

Due to the nature of Healthcare Support Assistants, this recruitment is normally conducted at a very local level and is on-going continually across the HSE 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.

Preliminary activity data\* currently available reflects the period to end of July 2021. As of this date, 11,418,854 home support hours were delivered nationally to 53,732 people, an increase of 16% in the number of home support hours delivered in the same period last year.

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**  
**Services for Older People – Operations**

*\*As a result of the recent cyber-attack on the HSE's IT systems, data gathering has been most affected across multiple departments both locally and nationally. For this reason, the data quoted on this response is subject to change and is preliminary in nature. The HSE continues to work through these issues and appreciates your patience and cooperation with same.*