



11th May 2022

Deputy Louise O'Reilly TD,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

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 19375/22

To ask the Minister for Health if assistance or support is available from the HSE for families on the direct funding scheme for homecare who cannot find carers; 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.

NSP 2022 provides for the following: -

- Rollover of the 2021 target levels of service into 2022, inclusive of the additional 5m hours funded in 2021 to 23.67m hours nationally
- 360,000 hours provided via Intensive Home Care Packages
- 230,000 hours associated with the roll-out of the pilot Statutory Home Support Scheme, which commenced in late 2021

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 March 2022. As of this date, 5,136,354 Home Support hours were delivered nationally to 55,080 people. Also, as of this date, there were 286 people assessed and waiting for funding for new or additional home support, while 5,458 people were assessed and approved for Home Support but are awaiting a carer to be assigned.

The HSE is aware that there are increasing capacity issues across both direct and indirect service provision. The HSE continues to advertise on an ongoing basis for Health Care Support 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 Health Care Support Assistants, recruitment is normally conducted at a local level and is on-going 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.

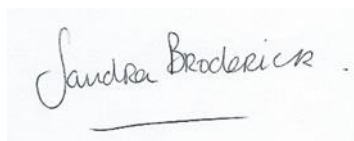
While there may be delays between the approval of funding and the availability of carers to commence delivery of home support hours in certain regions, significant work is underway to address these challenges. This includes work within the Department of Health to establish a cross-departmental Strategic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

Notwithstanding the above, it is important to note, that when a client is approved for Home Support, commencement of the service is dependent on carer capacity and funding being available for that service. Clients who are approved for a Home Support service, and where carers and/or funding is not readily available at that time, are placed on a waiting list on a priority basis until such time as either a carer or funding becomes available.

In addition, the HSE has commenced scoping out the use of personalised budgets as an alternative to the current model of home support service delivery. However, considerations such as governance, adherence to standards, employee/employer relationship, financial oversight and potential legislative impact etc. will need to be need to be addressed prior to the introduction of any formal policy on the use of personalised home support budgets.

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 black ink that reads "Sandra Broderick". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Sandra Broderick
Assistant National Director
Community Operations
Services for Older People