



10 March 2022

Deputy David Cullinane TD,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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 10680/22

To ask the Minister for Health the number of homecare packages which have been approved but which cannot be provided in full due to staff shortages or for other reasons; and if he will make a statement on the matter

PQ 10682/22

To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons that have been approved for home help hours but who cannot receive them either partially or in full due to staff shortages; 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 January 2022. As of this date, 1,653,854 Home Support hours were delivered nationally to 53,455 people. Also, as of this date, there were 273 people assessed and waiting for funding for new or additional home support, while 4,787 people were assessed and approved for Home Support but are awaiting a carer to be assigned.

Please note that there is a data gap for January 2022; therefore data should be considered as preliminary in nature and may be subject to change.

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



Oifig an Stiúirthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta
Oibríochtaí Pobail
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(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.

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 until such time as either a carer or funding becomes available.

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,

Sandra Broderick
Assistant National Director
Community Operations
Services for Older People