



01 March 2022

Deputy Pádraig O’Sullivan TD,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy O’Sullivan,

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 7765/22

To ask the Minister for Health if persons will be allowed to source their home help from reputable private providers in situations in which the HSE is unable to follow through on its commitments given the large number of persons that have been approved for home help from the HSE but are unable avail of the service due to the shortages of staff in the area; 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 in CHO 1 Sligo/Leitrim for January 2022.*

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 examine in detail at issues of recruitment, retention, skills development, pay and conditions, and sustainable employment of home support workers into the future.

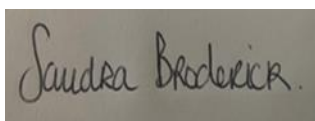
In addition, the HSE has commenced scoping out the use of personalised budgets as an alternative to the current model of home support service delivery. However, considerations such as governance, adherence to standards, employee/employer relationship, financial oversight, potential legislative impact 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.

Another option which is available to Home Support clients is that on Consumer Directed Home Support (CDHS). It is an option for persons' who apply for Home Support and who wish to have more control and choice over their care delivery in keeping with the principles of empowerment and autonomy inherent in person centred care. When a client is approved for a Home Support Service and HSE staff are not available to deliver the service, then an external provider, who has been approved by the HSE under Tender 2018 Arrangements, will deliver the service on their behalf. The CDHS approach facilitates clients to deal directly with HSE Approved Provider(s) of their choice and to arrange days and times of service delivery. Further information on Consumer Directed Home Support can be found at the following link: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/olderpeople/national-guidelines-and-procedures-for-the-standardised-implementation-of-the-home-support-service-hss-guidelines.pdf>

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 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,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Sandra Broderick".

Sandra Broderick
Assistant National Director
Community Operations
Services for Older People