



28 June 2022

**Deputy David Cullinane,
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 Questions, which was submitted to this Department for response.

PQ: 22/31070

To ask the Minister for Health if the HSE's process of tendering for homecare support providers will be updated; if this will take into account the commitments in the Programme for Government towards a statutory entitlement to home care and the ongoing implementation of Sláintecare; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ: 22/31071

To ask the Minister for Health if the Department of Health and the HSE have sufficient resources to meet an increased demand for home care alongside Sláintecare; if plans are being put in place to address future need in this regard; 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.

In recognition that Home Support is a key service within the Irish healthcare system, a joint work programme between the Department of Health and HSE for the design, development and regulation of the new statutory home support scheme is currently underway with the Department of Health leading out on a detailed process to determine what type of scheme is best to meet the ongoing and evolving needs of our older people. Part of this process is to test a new model of Home Support delivery, and this is presently underway in four pilot sites across

the country. This pilot programme will be entering the evaluation stage towards the end of Q3 2022, and once completed, will help to inform the overall design of the statutory Home Support Scheme. Draft Regulations for Providers of Home Support Services have been published by the Department of Health for a public consultation process currently underway.

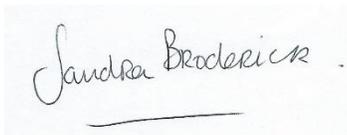
It is envisaged that the statutory Home Support Scheme will not be implemented until into 2023 therefore there is a requirement to ensure the availability of providers beyond the end date of the current tender arrangements, i.e. 31st December 2022.

The HSE is now at the strategy development stage for the next iteration of the tender process and have engaged a third party Grant Thornton to reach out to a broad spectrum of providers on our behalf to help to inform the procurement strategy for the contracts that will be in place for 2023. Service standards and value for money will be addressed in the tender, as they have been in previous tenders. It is anticipated that the Invitation to Tender will issue towards the end of Q3 for implementation on 1 January 2023.

With regards to available resources to meet the increased demand for Home Support services, it should be noted that the HSE was funded to provide an increased target of to 24.26m hours in 2021, rolled over to 2022 – an increase of 26%. Despite the challenges faced since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the HSE has continued, insofar as possible, to deliver Home Support services to those who need it most. This is evident in the comparable activity levels between May 2021, where activity levels were running behind target at 16.8%, and May 2022, where activity levels are currently running behind target at just 5.6%.

The current activity levels are also encouraging given the ongoing carer capacity issues being faced nationally, to which the HSE is working closely with the Department of Health on and 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 including the HSE to work with key stakeholders to examine in detail at issues of recruitment, retention, skills development, pay and conditions, and sustainable employment of home support workers into the future.

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