



13th July 2022

Deputy Duncan Smith,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Smith,

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: 22/34118

To ask the Minister for Health how far short of optimum staffing levels of home help support staff employed in primary care centres across the country are; 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 overall delivery of 24.26m hours nationally by year end. Preliminary activity data currently available reflects the period to end of May 2022. As of this date, 8,729,640 Home Support hours were delivered nationally to 55,392 people. This represents a 9.1% increase in the number of hours delivered when compared to the same period last year. Also, as of this date, there were 348 people assessed and waiting for funding for new or additional home support, while 4,720 people were assessed and approved for Home Support but are awaiting a carer to be assigned.

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.

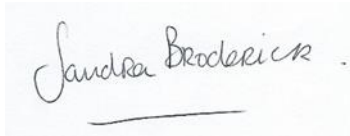
Home Support services are provided by both directly employed Healthcare Support Assistants (HCSAs) and Approved Providers with formal tendered arrangements with the HSE and while the HSE is committed to the direct employment of home support staff for those with the appropriate skill set, private providers are part of the landscape for home support provision and will continue to be used, not least for the choice of care which they allow to the user of the service

The HSE is fully cognisant of 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. As at end of May 2022 (latest available data) there were 5,267 Healthcare Support Assistants (HCSAs) employed with the HSE nationally. Based on current waiting list levels, and taking into account the average

number of Home Support hours per client per week, an additional circa 900 home support workers across both direct and indirect provision would be required to meet current unmet need.

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 the establishment of the cross-departmental Strategic Workforce Advisory Group, led by Department of Health, 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.

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 thin horizontal line.

Sandra Broderick
Assistant National Director
Community Operations
Services for Older People