



22nd September 2022

Deputy Carol Nolan,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Dear Deputy Nolan,

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 43143/22

To ask the Minister for Health the steps that are being taken to increase the number of rehabilitative care beds, long-term nursing home beds and the financing of homecare packages to free-up acute hospital beds for admissions from the emergency departments; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Rehabilitative Care Beds & Long-Term Nursing Home Beds

The National Office for Services for Older Persons, Operations, have undertaken a review of both long and short-stay beds in publically managed residential care facilities. This will allow for more comprehensive planning and bespoke responses to individual CHO's residential care needs.

Following this review the National Office for Services for Older Persons, Operations are in the process of carrying out face-to-face engagements with local management structures for the purpose of maximising bed occupancy levels and increasing bed stock numbers. The National Office are also engaging with local CHO areas regarding remedial plans to meet local challenges. Together with the Local Areas we are identifying where beds may be repurposed to support hospital egress as well as hospital avoidance.

At the end of 2020, a decision was made to increase short stay bed capacity through the purchasing of private contracted short stay beds with additional therapy supports to facilitate hospital discharges/hospital avoidance with the provision of additional beds to support patients who required a period of therapies as part of their short term residential care needs. There are now 646 private short stay beds being funded nationally through this initiative with plans to bring on stream a further 40 in the next 6-8 weeks. The provision of these short stay beds has added significant capacity to the short stay community beds available around the country.

In addition Transitional Care Funding is in place to assist Acute Hospitals with discharging of patients who have been approved for long stay care or who require a period of convalescence in a nursing home before returning home. This funding covers the cost of the Nursing Home bed until the NHSS (Fair Deal) application has been finalised or for the period of convalescence care up to six weeks. On



average 200 patients are supported weekly to discharge from hospitals under this funding support and this will remain in place on a demand led basis during the winter months.

Home Care Packages

NSP 2022 provided for the overall delivery of 24.26m hours nationally by year-end. 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-centered personal care model. The development of this new service model grounded in the National Standards for Better Safer Healthcare and sufficiently flexible to meet the more complex needs of an aging population brings with it challenges of ensuring that all providers, including HSE directly provided services, are in a position to deliver a quality service and one in which the workforce is trained and competent to undertake the required duties.

The Sláintecare vision is to achieve a universal single-tier health and social care system where everyone has equal access to services based on need, and not ability to pay. Since its initial inception, following the publication of the Sláintecare Report in May 2017 and the subsequent approval of the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy in July 2018, significant additional funding has been provided to the HSE to further deliver essential home support services to those most in need in our communities.

Preliminary activity data currently available reflects the period to end of July 2022. As of this date, 12,432,029 Home Support hours were delivered nationally to 56,284 people, which represents a 7.8% increase in service provision when compared to the same period last year.

Since 2015, there has been a 118% increase in funding provision for Home Support Services with funding in 2022 at circa. €666.5m. *(Please note that these figures exclude any provision relating to the ongoing Public Health emergency).* In addition, please note that the HSE does not allocate a specific budget in respect of indirect service provision. This is due to the HSE operating a formal tender process, a feature of which is varying levels of pricing across all approved tendered providers and service is commissioned from external providers for new clients and increases in service provision for existing clients in accordance with the Tender Standard Operating Procedure, where HSE direct services are not available. On 1st September 2022, the HSE published its Invitation to Participate in respect of the Home Support Tender 2023 (HSE19479) on <https://www.etenders.gov.ie/>, with the closing date for receipt of applications being 26th September 2022.

The increase in funding supports have provided for an increase in service delivery, together with the streamlining of Home Support services and the pilot Home Support Scheme, in preparation for the legislation and regulation of Home Support Services. The Department of Health is presently leading out on the development of a statutory Home Support Service which will consider the future design of both the funding and regulation systems for these essential 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.



Oifig an Stiúirthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta –
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Yours Sincerely,

Sandra Broderick,
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Services for Older People.