



**Head of Service for Older Persons
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare**
Health Service Executive
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Cúram Sláinte Pobail - Corcaigh & Ciarraí
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Teach Caha, Párc Ghnó & Teicneolaíochta
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26th April 2023

Deputy Holly Cairns, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann
Dublin 2

PQ ref 17501/23

“To ask the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to address the home support waiting list in CHO4; and if he will make a statement on the matter”.

PQ ref 17502/23

“To ask the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to recruit more healthcare support assistants in CHO4; and if he will make a statement on the matter”.

Dear Deputy Cairns,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Provision of Home Support is a core service for older people and their families and is essential in supporting older people to continue to live within their communities. Cork Kerry Community Healthcare continues to work towards increasing Home Support provision across the region; however, difficulties have been experienced in relation to recruitment and retention of staff with certain areas experiencing increased pressures. Approved private providers, who work with the HSE in fulfilling Home Support service requests, are experiencing similar staffing issues.

Despite the significant level of service provision, the demand for Home Support continues to grow as the population aged over 65 years increases. If Home Support staff (HSE or private providers) are not available to deliver support, then the request for a home support service is waitlisted. Those people who are on the waiting list have been clinically assessed and are reviewed, as staffing resources become available, to ensure that individual cases continue to be dealt with on a priority basis within the available staffing, having regard to the client’s assessed needs. Referrals are prioritised depending on their care needs. Many clients receive a service within days of approval but others are placed on a wait list, due to carer availability. This occurs predominantly in more rural areas.

There has been an ongoing level of retirements and resignations from the Health Care Support Assistant (HCSA) workforce across Cork and Kerry in recent years - 133 in 2021 and 144 in 2022. This is in part due to the age profile of the workforce and also due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic – a number of HCSAs have opted for alternative careers.

At the end of March 2023, there were 1,575 clients across Cork and Kerry waiting for new or additional home support hours. None of these waitlisted clients are awaiting funding approval; the only reason for the delay in allocating their service is carer availability. Cork Kerry Community Healthcare is making every effort to recruit additional home support staff in a challenging recruitment environment. Delivering enhanced capacity requires substantial recruitment and strategic workforce challenges are



in evidence in the sector. When new staff are recruited, they are prioritised for areas where the demand is greatest.

Two specialist HCSA recruitment officers have been appointed within CKCH and they have run extensive recruitment and advertising campaigns over the last 18 months. Our most recent recruitment campaign was launched on the 14th March 2023 and closed on the 12th April 2023. The sifting process is almost complete with total applicants as follows:

- Kerry – 60 applicants with 46 invited to interview.
- Cork – 36 applicants with 24 invited to interview.

Interviews are scheduled to take place from week commencing 8th May 2023.

Localised campaigns continue in tandem on an ongoing basis.

In 2022, a total of 125 HCSAs were recruited into the services through these ongoing recruitment campaigns. However, as stated above, a total of 144 HCSAs resigned or retired in 2022. To date, in the past twelve months, 152 new HCSAs have commenced employment with the home support service across CHO4.

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare is acutely aware that there are capacity issues across both direct and indirect provision of Home Support throughout the region, particularly in some of our more rural locations. Improving access to home support is a service priority and, to this end, we continue to advertise on an on-going basis for healthcare support assistants in a concerted effort to recruit as many suitable candidates as possible.

I trust this clarifies the position and if you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Jackie Daly
Head of Service for Older People

