



**Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,**  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
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21<sup>st</sup> July 2023

Deputy Pauline Tully,  
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Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
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Dear Deputy Tully,

The Health Service Executive 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: 35365/23**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the additional funding allocated for personal assistance; the additional hours created for personal assistance in the same period; the uptake in personal assistance hours; the number of people availing of personal assistance hours; the unmet need for personal assistance hours in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and to-date in 2023; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Pauline Tully*

**HSE Response**

In 2023, Disability Services is allocated over c. €2.5 billion to provide a range of services throughout the country and is being spent in line with nationally agreed policy for disability services, whilst at the same time endeavouring to maximise value. Services include Residential and Respite Services, Day Services and Rehabilitative Training, PA and Home Support Services, Therapeutic Supports, and Neuro-rehabilitation Services.

The HSE provides a range of assisted living services including Personal Assistant and Home Support Services to support individuals to maximise their capacity to live full and independent lives.

PA and Home Support Services are provided either directly by the HSE or through a range of voluntary service providers. The majority of specialised disability provision (80%) is delivered through non-statutory sector service providers.

**Home Support Service**

The Home Support service provides domestic and or personal care inputs at regular intervals on a weekly basis. Temporary relief is offered to the main carer by providing a trained reliable care attendant to look after the needs of the person with the disability. It also supports the individual with the disability in terms of their care plan, with particular attention on the personal needs of the individual.



## PA Service

Personal Assistant (PA) services provides 1 to 1 support to people with physical disabilities in their homes and communities by trained, professional Personal Assistants. The PA service facilitates a person's independence, improves their quality of life, provides access to education and employment, and supports them to participate in their local community. A PA support can range from a few hours a week to daily assistance. A vital element of this personalised support is the full involvement of the individual in planning and agreeing the type, times when support is provided to them and choosing the best way to use their allocated PA hours, to enable them to achieve maximum control over their life by tailoring their service to meet their unique support requirements.

While there is no centrally maintained waiting list for PA services, the local HSE CHO areas are aware of the needs in their respective areas and work with the local Service Providers to respond within the resources available.

Currently, each CHO has a process to manage applications and referrals for PA Services. Individual's needs are assessed against the criteria for prioritisation. Resource allocation is determined by the needs of the individual, compliance with prioritisation criteria, and the level of resources available. As with every service there is not a limitless resource available for the provision of home support services and while the resources available are substantial they are finite. In this context, services are discretionary and the number of hours granted is determined by other support services already provided to the person/family.

While many individuals are adequately provided for by their current level of support, it is also the case that many would benefit from more support hours if they were available.

The HSE is committed to protecting the level of Personal Assistant and Home Support Services to support 10,000 individuals to maximise their capacity to live full and independent lives and in 2022 the targets set in the NSP were exceeded with the delivery of 1.75 million hours of PA Services (above the target by +2.7%) and 3.37 million hours of Home Support Services (+8% above target for the year).

The current level of PA service includes an over 15% increase in PA hours totalling 270,370 hours in the National Service Plans since 2020 as follows:

- 2020 = 40,000 additional hours of personal assistant supports
- 2021 = 40,000 additional hours of personal assistant supports
- 2022 = 120,000 additional hours of personal assistant supports
- 2023 = 70,370 additional personal assistant hours.

The table below details the funding allocated to PA and Home Support Services in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. Funding allocated has increased year on year. It is important to note that PA supports are funded alongside Home Support Service provision.

Service area	Budget 2018	Final 2019	Final NSP 2020	Final NSP 2021	Final NSP 2022
	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000
PA & Home Support	80,957	84,909	93,885	100,613	109,809
<b>Total Funding Allocated</b>	1,772,300	1,903,625	2,049,500	2,209,719	2,347,380

Increased investment by Government in recent years is welcome. The HSE will lead the work to improve how the resource is allocated and used to provide this essential support for people to live an independent life.



## Disability Support Application Management Tool (DSMAT)

While there is no centrally collated information on applications for Personal Assistance services, the HSE Disability Services has introduced a system called the Disability Support Application Management Tool (DSMAT), which provides a list and detailed profiles of people (Adults & Children) who need additional funded supports in each CHO.

DSMAT captures detailed information on home and family circumstances and a detailed presentation profile of the individuals. This enables Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) areas to record and manage requests for support and to ensure that the application process is equitable and transparent.

It is important to note that in the absence of a statutory, legislative framework providing entitlement to services, the DSMAT is not a chronological waiting list. Rather, it is a support to the CHO areas to feed into its decision making process around prioritisation of services, subject to budgetary constraints.

This means that services are allocated on the basis of greatest presenting need and associated risk factors.

Please see tables below - National Aggregation for 2020 to 2023.

The figures below represent a "point in time" analysis and may not include applications received in to the CHO but not yet processed onto the DSMAT tool.

Applications for services entered into the DSMAT tool by CHO areas are primarily categorised as Residential or Non-Residential. In this regard, the breakdown of Non-Residential requests (which may include Day Respite, Home Support Hours, Personal Assistance or combinations thereof) for the past number of years is as follows:

### Applications for Non Residential Services

<b>Total Applicants: Personal Assistance and Home Support Services and Day Respite Services</b>	<b>Mid. Yr. 2020</b>	<b>Mid. Yr. 2021</b>	<b>Mid. Yr. 2022</b>	<b>Mid. Yr. 2023</b>
	<b>1619</b>	<b>1903</b>	<b>2142</b>	<b>2492</b>

**NOTE:** Applications for non-residential service can include elements of some or all of services available and is not always stated explicitly which specific non-residential services are being requested/required given that at any point of time individual records may be at different stages of local CHO-level case management practices. Notwithstanding the foregoing, we can extract those records where a specific non-residential service request has been entered at the point in time at which the national data aggregation has occurred. As of Mid-Yr. 2023, 368 specific requests for PA service and 607 specifically applications for Home Support could be identified from the data extract.

The HSE acknowledges the role of PA Services in supporting the person with a disability to realise the entitlements set out in Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). As Ireland has now ratified the UN Convention it will be necessary to have a policy on the provision of PA services with an agreed definition, criteria for accessing the service, assessment process and an indication of the level of support that can be provided.

In this context, the HSE is in the process of establishing a Working Group on PA Services; work is underway to develop the Terms of Reference and proposed membership of the Working Group which is planned to commence in early Quarter 2, 2023.

The HSE has contributed to the development by Government of the Capacity Review of the Disability Sector (2020) and the draft Disability Action Plan 2023 – 2026. These set out the future service needs and how they might be addressed. They incorporate the dual development goals to (a) increase the



range of hours available to individuals already in receipt of some PA support and (b) increasing the hours available to make the service available to more people.

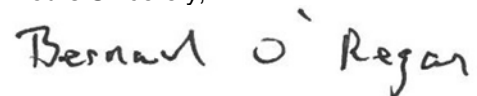
This report will be used by the Working Group being established to improve this important service, as well as making a valuable contribution to the service planning process.

### ***Future Planning***

As referenced above, with regard to additional PA Services, the Department of Health's 2021 Disability Capacity Review advises that up to €15 million per year by 2032 – equivalent to 600,000 additional hours - is needed to meet the requirements for Personal Assistants and Home Support.

Each CHO continues to actively manage applications for support from service users with high levels of acuity/ safeguarding risks, through active case-management and inter-agency cooperation

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernard O'Regan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Mr Bernard O'Regan,  
Head of Operations - Disability Services,  
Community Operations**

