



**Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,**  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

**Office of the Head of Operations,**  
Disability Services/Social Care Division,  
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick.

T: 00353 (0) 61 483369

Suíomh Gréasáin/Website: <http://www.hse.ie>

26<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Deputy Pauline Tully,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [pauline.tully@oireachtas.ie](mailto:pauline.tully@oireachtas.ie)

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: 35368/23**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the additional funding allocated for intensive home support packages for disabled children; the number of additional intensive home support packages allocated to disabled children; the unmet need identified for intensive home support packages for disabled children in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and to-date in 2023; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**HSE Response**

**Home Support Services**

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

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.

The Home Support service provides domestic and or personal care inputs at regular intervals on a weekly basis. Temporary relief is offered to the carer by providing a trained reliable care attendant to look after the needs of the person with the disability. The service provides support to the parents to enable them to spend quality time with the other siblings in the family. It also supports the individual with the disability in terms of their care plan, with particular attention on the personal needs of the individual. Home supports can be an alternative to residential care, where support to individuals in daily living can avoid the need for full time residential services.

Services are accessed through an application process or through referrals from public health nurses or other community based staff. Individuals' needs are evaluated against the criteria for prioritisation for the particular services and then decisions are made in relation to the allocation of resources. 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.

### **Intensive Support Packages**

This was a new development initiative put in place in 2020 and then further developed in 2021. The rationale behind the initiative was to demonstrate a person-centred approach to targeted supports designed to maintain the person in their own home and community, reducing a risk of future residential needs.

These intensive transitional support packages, as referred to in NSP 2020, were mainly aimed at children and young people with complex/high support needs experiencing substantial levels of need, but who do not, as yet, require a high cost long term residential placement. The intention being to prevent family breakdown and demand for emergency residential placements by providing access to pre-crisis interventions such as:

- Intensive in-home visiting supports;
- Planned residential respite interventions;
- Specialist behavioural support interventions;
- Access to planned extended day / weekend and summer day based activities.

In 2020, Disability Services committed to provide 144 intensive transitional support packages. However, at end of December 2020, a total of 857 intensive home support packages were developed across the 9 CHOs.

In 2021, €6m in funding was allocated to Intensive Support packages. Disability Services committed to developing 358 additional intensive support packages and by year end had put in place 497 intensive support packages. This included 437 new packages and 60 packages approved in 2020 against additional Q4 funding, which were maintained in 2021.

The significant increase on the NSP targets was thought to be indicative of the requirement for additional in-home services to compensate for the reduction in the delivery of traditional respite services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the HSE acknowledges that the delivery of these Intensive Support Packages exceeded the targets agreed as part of the service planning process in both 2020 and 2021. It is also acknowledged that a number of packages recorded in the 857 referenced above may have been focused purely on hours of support and did not contain the more holistic elements around behaviour support and family-centred planning. Again, the impact of the pandemic and the need to enhance core levels of service during closures of and service reductions in day services and respite played a significant role here.

In accordance with the NSP 2022, the HSE was allocated funding to provide 422 in home respite supports for emergency cases; this included 402 packages put in place in 2021, which have been maintained in 2022, plus 10 new supported living packages and 10 new intensive support packages to support transitions and discharges from acute services and the National Rehabilitation Hospital. At end of December 2022, 18 new intensive support packages and 19 new supported living packages were developed. As per the 2022 National Service Plan, funding for this was provided under all new measures – Disability Services.

In accordance with NSP 2023, Disability Services committed to the provision of 447 in home respite supports for emergency cases; this includes 420 packages put in place in 2022 which have been maintained in 2023, plus 27 additional in-home respite packages to children and young adults outlined in NSP 2023. At end of May 2023, 422 in home respite supports for emergency cases were delivered.



Please also note that these intensive support packages would be provided in addition to the traditional services that we deliver, such as Day Services; Respite Services; Personal Assistance and Home Support Services.

The need for increased services is acknowledged and the HSE continues to work with agencies to explore various ways of responding to this need in line with the budget available.

### ***Disability Support Application Management Tool (DSMAT)***

The HSE Disability Services has introduced a system called the Disability Support Application Management Tool (DSMAT), which enables Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) areas to record and manage requests for support and to ensure that the application process is equitable and transparent. The DSMAT provides a consistent listing process for each CHO Area by presenting a detailed profile of the individuals (Adults & Children) who require funded supports outside of the current service quantum.

It captures detailed information on home and family circumstances and a detailed presentation profile of the individuals, including specialised profiles of behavioural intensity, key diagnoses, and complex support needs due to the extent and intensity of intellectual and/or physical & sensory disability.

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 area 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.

The most recent information available, which is a demand profile, outside of current service quantum, shows that there are 1,997 applications for Non-Residential Services, such as PA, Home Support and Respite Services.

### ***National Ability Support System (NASS)***

NASS is a national database that records information about disability-funded services that are received or required as a result of an intellectual disability, developmental delay, physical, sensory, neurological, learning, autism spectrum, speech/language disability arising from disease, disorder or trauma. The purpose of NASS is to gather information to underpin the planning, development and organisation of disability-funded services. A person is eligible to be registered on NASS if they receive or require (now or within the next five years) a disability-funded service.

NASS is funded by the Department of Health and managed by the Health Research Board (HRB) and the latest reports can be found at the following link:

<https://www.hrb.ie/data-collections-evidence/disability-service-use-and-need/latest-data/>

In accordance with the National Service Plan, the HSE continues to work closely with the HRB to fully implement the National Ability Supports System (NASS) and is committed to work with the Community Digital Oversight Group to develop disability information requirements within the Integrated Community Case Management System.

### ***Future Planning***

With regard to the estimated number of intensive home support packages for children with disabilities that will be required in 2024, the HSE will take part in the Estimates process during 2023 in advance of the publication of the 2024 Service Plan and Budget.

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,

Bernard O'Regan

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

