



Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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27th June 2023

Deputy Duncan Smith,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: duncan.smith@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Smith,

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: 29454/23

To ask the Minister for Health how much each section 38 and 39 organisation receives from the HSE per hour to fund personal assistant services; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

PA and Home Support 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.

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.

In the normal course of service delivery, there will be ongoing reviews throughout the year to ensure that if needs change the service provided will address this change within available resources. An individual's PA or Home Support hours may be adjusted following a service review where service demand can result in one individual's service being reduced in order to address priority needs of other people with disabilities within that community.

Currently, each CHO has a process to manage applications and referrals for PA and Home Support Services. 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 delivery of Services over the last few years has been significantly impacted by the pandemic. While services are fully operational, there may be reduced capacity in some areas due to necessary infection prevention and control requirements and all decisions made regarding the provision of services to an individual must be based on individual risk assessments and in line with public health guidance.

The current level of PA Service, in particular, 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 delivery of PA and Home Support Services remained steady during 2022; PA Services was above the National Service Plan target by +2.7% and Home Support Services was +8% above target for the year. The figures for quarter 1, 2023 were also largely in line with national targets.

Funding

The table below details the funding allocated to PA and Home Support Services in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. 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
Total Funding Allocated	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.

Service provision

Within the Disability Services, voluntary service provider agencies provide the majority of services in partnership with and on behalf of the Health Service Executive.

The HSE is providing funding to over 419 organisations through over 1,045 service arrangements throughout the country.

At the end of 2022, there were 15 Section 38 Organisations in receipt of over €1billion funded by HSE Disability Services. There were 205 Section 39 Organisations with either a Grant Aid Agreement or a Service Arrangement with HSE Disability Services with funding provided amounting to over €667 million. The remaining organisations include Out of State and For Profit Organisations.

Each of these organisations has service arrangements with the HSE for the provision of services to service users.

HSE Governance Framework

The HSE has established a formal and robust Governance Framework to cover funding relationships with all Non-Statutory Agencies that are contracted to provide services on behalf of the HSE. This includes voluntary organisations funded under Section 38 and Section 39 of the Health Act. The framework was introduced in order to implement the legislative provisions of the Health Act, 2004 and to reflect the requirements for public accountability whereby the HSE is legally obliged to account for all public expenditure on health and personal social services and to contractually underpin the grant-funding provided. All funding arrangements with non-statutory agencies are formalised by complying with this Governance Framework which has two different components:



- Part 1 - A Service Arrangement that is signed every 1 to 3 years by both parties and sets out the legal requirements that the agency must comply with to receive funding for the provision of services.
- Part 2 – A Set of 10 Schedules which must be completed and signed by the Agency and the HSE which sets out the detail of the service and the exact funding that the HSE is providing for the delivery of this service. This Set of Schedules also identifies the quality standards and best practice guidelines to be adhered to in the provision all services, along with process for managing complaints in relation to service provision.

The Part 2 Service Arrangement /Grant Aid agreement is completed every year for every separate service/ service arrangement with every organisation providing services funded by the HSE. The completion of same involves collaboration and dialogue between the HSE and the Service Provider and involves agreement on anticipated outcomes that the service will deliver, agreed performance management requirements and a reporting timetable regarding reports and meetings. This level of performance monitoring will depend on the type of service, the level of functions and level of funding provided to the organisation.

There are many organisations providing Personal Assistance services within the range of services being provided. It is not possible to disaggregate the funding that is allocated to organisations separately from overall funding provided to organisations.

The average hourly payment for Personal Assistance services is approximately €27 euro per hour.

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.

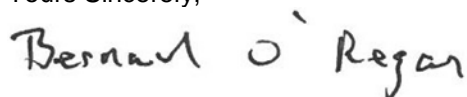
This report will be used by the Working Group being established to improve this important service, as well as making a valuable contribution to the service planning process.

Future Planning

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,



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

