



**Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,**  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
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6<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Deputy Pauline Tully,  
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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: 51935/23**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of people currently working as homecare assistants in both the public and private sector, in tabular form; and the estimated number of people needed to fully staff the homecare sector in both the public and private sector, in tabular form.*

**PQ: 51936/23**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of people currently assessed as in need of homecare who have not been allocated hours due to a shortage of staff.*

**HSE Response**

HSE Specialist Disability Services 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 assistant 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

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.

### ***Waiting Lists***

Whilst there is currently no centrally maintained list of people awaiting these services, each Community Health Organisation Area would be aware of the presenting needs within each of the geographic areas. Following referral and assessment, available resources are allocated to clients with highest level of need.

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 Non-Residential Services demand accounts for 2492 applications, of which applications for Children account for 25% of the total. Please note that Non-Residential comprises demand for either Respite, Personal Assistance (P.A.) or Home Support Hours. Frequently, the required service response may be a mixture of support hour and centre-based respite.



## Home Support/ Care staff

Information pertaining to staffing levels in health services are generated by the HSE Strategic Workforce Planning & Intelligence Unit. Information is available per care group area including Disability Services and can be obtained at the following web link:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/our-workforce>

It is important to note that the reports provided by the HSE Strategic Workforce Planning & Intelligence Unit refer to staff numbers in the HSE and in S38 organisations and do not include staff employed in S39 organisations.

As mentioned above, Home Support Services are provided either directly by the HSE or through a range of voluntary and commercial service providers.

The HSE does not collect information regarding staff employed by S39 and private organisations.

The end of October 2023 report indicates that there are 20,368 WTE currently employed in Disability Services (S38 and HSE).

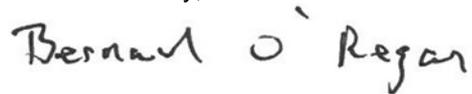
Of this, there are 7812 WTE Healthcare Assistants, 69 WTE Home Helps, 1,779 WTE termed Other Care Staff and 554 WTE Support Staff. (S38 and HSE).

It is not possible to disaggregate from this information the numbers of these staff working in Home Care / Home Support roles.

Currently the HSE and its funded agencies are operating in a very competitive global market for healthcare talent as there are significant shortages of qualified healthcare professionals across the globe.

The HSE and Service Providers continue to explore a wide range of options and initiatives to enhance the retention and recruitment of essential staff across all aspects of the health services.

Yours Sincerely,



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

