



Oifig an Stiúirthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta
Oibríochtaí Pobail
Seirbhísí do Dhaoine Scothaosta

Office of the Assistant National Director –
Community Operations
Services for Older People

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Deputy Darren O' Rourke,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy O' Rourke,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) 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: 23/46367

To ask the Minister for Health in relation to homecare services as provided by the HSE, his Department's policy with reference to outsourcing homecare services; if there are plans to reduce the outsourcing of homecare services; if there are plans to increase the staffing for homecare services in the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

The Home Support Service is funded by Government to deliver a volume of service each year as approved in the HSE National Service Plan. It is a non-statutory service and access to the current service is based on assessment of the person's needs by the HSE and having regard to the available resources and the competing demands for the services.

Home Support services for older people are provided either by directly employed staff or external providers who have formal tender arrangements with the HSE to deliver the services. The type of support provided includes personal care and, where appropriate, essential household duties relating to the client's assessed needs. As the service has expanded over the years, and as more providers entered the market, providing much needed capacity to enable more people to remain at home for longer; formal arrangements with external providers have been put in place through the tendering process. This process ensures fairness and transparency in the selection of service providers and, in the absence of regulation, to ensure an appropriate standard of services being delivered.

Despite the significant level of service provision, the demand for Home Support, and its importance as an alternative service to long stay care, has grown considerably over the past number of years. Similarly, the type of Home Support that is now required to meet the needs of the population is a more person-centred personal care model.

In relation to the use of private providers, the HSE has committed to the direct employment of Home Support staff to maximum effect for those with the appropriate skill set. However, it should be noted that private providers are part of the landscape for Home Support provision and will continue to be used, not least for the choice of care which they allow to the user of the service. The HSE has implemented an Authorisation Scheme (AS) for the supply of the Home Support Scheme (HSS) that commenced on 14th August 2023. Under the Authorisation scheme system the rates for the Home Support Scheme are fixed for all Approved Providers. The HSE has appointed Home Support Scheme Providers as Approved Providers under the Authorisation Scheme in each CHO.



Recruitment and retention of Home Support staff for both direct and indirect service provision remains a significant challenge leading to capacity issues cross the Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs).

The Recruitment Reform and Resourcing (RRR) Programme was established in June 2022 to form a coordinated response to these challenges and the HSE Resourcing Strategy – Resourcing our Future was launched in June 2023.

This RRR Programme introduces a focused capacity to grow our workforce and support our services to meet projected increased workforce demand while ensuring that staff are enabled to work at the top of their license to maximise the delivery of healthcare services. This Programme is a multi-year, Strategic Programme of work. It aims to increase capacity within services and have positive impacts on the delivery of integrated and community based care to patients, service users and their families.

This Strategy developed is an action orientated piece of work that has been developed by the services and with the services through 5 profession led groups, one of which focuses on the grade categories of Patient Client Care & Support. These groups have identified both the challenges and a suite of actions that need to be taken. 112 actions in total have been identified and the first 27 have been prioritised and have commenced implementation. Many of the actions identified and prioritised relate to common challenges and themes across grade categories. Examples of which are Talent Attraction and Engagement. One such output is the development of the HSE Career Hub which was launched earlier this year. (<https://careerhub.hse.ie/>) This is a registration and notification system for prospective candidates of which to date over 21,130 have registered their interest of which 2,652 are in the category of Patient & Client Care. It is expected that there will be a specific focus on Home Support opportunities to profile the services to the employment market in the coming weeks.

It is recognised that supporting and developing local talent will be key in developing a sustainable workforce for the future and as such one initiative that is currently in progress is the development of two multi-agency local pilot projects working with education, social inclusion organisations and the HSE to identify people committed to that local area, supporting them in obtaining the relevant qualifications and employment

This Strategy is not a static document but will evolve over time to meet the changing landscape both nationally and internationally.

You will find more information on the HSE Resourcing Strategy from the following link:
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/hrstrategiesreports/hse-resourcing-strategy.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Jordan
Head of Service – Home Support
Services for Older People
Community Operations