



17<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

**Deputy Martin Browne,**  
**Dáil Eireann,**  
**Leinster House,**  
**Kildare Street,**  
**Dublin 2.**

**Dear Deputy Browne,**

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 14217/24**

**To ask the Minister for Health if consideration is being given to increasing the travel allowance for homecare support workers given the increased cost of fuel has not been matched with an increase in the travelling allowance; his views on the situation at present regarding the impact of this shortfall on workers; 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, having regard to the available resources and the competing demands for the service.

Home Support Services for Older People are provided either by directly employed staff or by voluntary and private providers who have formal tender arrangements with the HSE to deliver the services. As the service has expanded over the years, and with more providers having 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.

In 2023 the existing competitive tender system for the contracting of home support hours from external companies (indirect service provision/hours) was replaced with an Authorisation Scheme which facilitates new entrants over the life time of the scheme with a view to extending capacity. It provides for fixed pricing and a common framework for the delivery of Home Support Services. The application of the Authorisation Scheme core hourly rate of €31.00 was subject to the advancement of sectoral reform incorporating travel time for Home Support Workers (HSWs), addressing the living wage and reform of legacy rates as recommended by the Strategic Workforce Advisory Group. Service Providers are now required to pay travel time as part of remuneration to staff delivering services on behalf of the HSE in relation to the provision of Home Support Services.

Following the successful completion of two Rounds of the Scheme, 102 individual companies have been appointed to the Authorisation Scheme across the 9 CHOs. The current Service Arrangements may be extended for a further period, in line with terms of the Authorisation Scheme. Any extension of arrangements and associated terms and conditions will be subject to Department of Health approval and engagement with the relevant provider representative bodies. The Provider Forum, has also been re-established and provides a regular platform for dialogue between the HSE and For Profit and Not for Profit Providers of Home Support Services.

Monitoring of the day to day operation of the Authorisation Scheme is managed through existing governance structures in each CHO and in accordance with Service Arrangements and the Standard Operating Procedure, available at the following web-link:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/olderpeople/authorisation-scheme-standard-operating-procedures-v2.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Jordan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

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**Kathleen Jordan**  
**Head of Service – Home Support**  
**Services for Older People - Access and Integration**