



Oifig an Stiúirthóir Cúnta Náisiúnta,
Foireann Míchumais Náisiúnta,
An Chéad Urlár - Oifigí 13, 14, 15,
Àras Phlásóg na Rós, Coimpléasc Gnó na hOllscoile,
Páirc Náisiúnta Teicneolaíochta,
Caladh an Treoigh,
Luimneach.

Office of the Assistant National Director,
National Disability Team,
First Floor- Offices 13, 14, 15,
Roselawn House, University Business Complex,
National Technology Park,
Castletroy,
Limerick.

23rd April 2024

Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: padraig.maclochlinn@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn,

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: 17742/24

To ask the Minister for Health the process for a disabled person to apply for a personal assistant through the HSE; if it is the same process in all CHO areas; what is the process for allocating hours to a person once a decision is made that a person qualifies for a personal assistant; if he will provide in tabular form a guide of the number of hours that can be allocated to a person based on their needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter

HSE Response

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.

Personal Assistant (PA) services provides 1 to 1 support to people with physical disabilities in their homes and communities by trained, professional Personal Assistants. The PA service facilitates a person's independence, improves their quality of life, provides access to education and employment, and supports them to participate in their local community. A PA support can range from a few hours a week to daily assistance. A vital element of this personalised support is the full involvement of the individual in planning and agreeing the type, times when support is provided to them and choosing the best way to use their allocated PA hours, to enable them to achieve maximum control over their life by tailoring their service to meet their unique support requirements.



While there is no centrally maintained waiting list for PA services, the local HSE CHO areas are aware of the needs in their respective areas and work with the local Service Providers to respond within the resources available.

Currently, each CHO has a process to manage applications and referrals for PA Services. Services are accessed through an application process or through referrals from public health nurses or other community based staff.

Individual's 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 PA 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 the available resources and other support services already provided to the person.

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.

The DSMAT is not a chronological waiting list; 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.

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 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.

As mentioned above, PA Services, in the main, are provided through a range of voluntary service providers.

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 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 has established a Personal Assistance Review Working Group. The HSE is committed to ensuring that the experience and voice of persons with lived experience of PA forms an active part in producing real change and at the highest level in terms of oversight structures.

The HSE is committed to protecting the level of Personal Assistant (PA) and Home Support Services available to persons with disabilities. With regard to personal assistant services, expected activity for 2024, as per the 2024 Service Plan, is 1.85 million PA service hours to be delivered to 2,740 adults with a physical and / or sensory disability.

Future Planning

With regard to additional PA and Home Support Services, 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.

The Action Plan for Disability Services 2024 – 2026 advises that 800,000 extra PA hours and 110,000 extra hours a year is required by 2026 to address shortfall in services and to support individuals with disabilities to live a fuller more independent life and participate in normal activities in the community, in line with UNCRPD Article 19.



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

Bernard O'Regan
Assistant National Director,
Disability Services Team

