



**Head of Service for Older Persons
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare**

Health Service Executive
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Cúram Sláinte Pobail - Corcaigh & Ciarraí
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
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6th March 2024

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann
Dublin 2

PQ ref 9703/24

“To ask the Minister for Health what measures are being taken to ensure that home supports can be put in place for people currently waitlisted for these services in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Moynihan,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Across Cork and Kerry there are currently 8,293 people receiving a Home Support Service with 33,264 hours of support being provided (*week commencing 12th February 2024*). The majority of clients who are prescribed Home Support have a service commence almost immediately. However, on occasion, part of the prescribed service may not be put in place - this would be predominantly down to lack of carer availability in the area. Our wait list is made up of both clients who are awaiting a new service (i.e. currently are not in receipt of any service), and clients who are awaiting additional hours/part of the originally prescribed service (i.e. they are receiving some home support). Waiting lists are constantly being validated and priority is given to those clients requiring discharge home from hospital and with higher levels of dependency.

When a request for home support is received, the HSE's priority is to identify availability to deliver that support. Capacity is sought both within our own home support service and with our approved private providers. If the HSE's home support service does not have available home support staff, then the request is sent out to the private providers and if any of those providers have capacity the service will be delivered by them. However, increasingly, our private providers are experiencing similar recruitment and retention issues to ourselves, resulting in some applications being waitlisted until availability arises within either sector (HSE or private).

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. Our population is growing and it is also ageing and this means that demand for home support services is projected to increase substantially. The ageing population is also directly impacting our workforce with Health Care Assistants (Home Support) retiring or resigning from their roles. Other challenges which we have faced in recent times include competing with the private and voluntary sectors to access the same skilled workforce and the recent pause on recruitment. Since the COVID pandemic, and with Ireland currently at full employment with unemployment rates dipping to their lowest levels since records began, there also appears to be a shift away from caring roles, such as the Health Care Assistant (Home Support) role, towards other employment sectors.



As you will be aware, addressing the shortage of care workers in Ireland is an urgent priority for Government, with an implementation group established to implement the report of the Strategic Workforce Advisory Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Health Care Assistants, in areas including pay and conditions of employment. There are challenges in the sector, particularly on the workforce side. Progress has been made and we are delivering more support hours than ever and we currently have sufficient funding for home support hours but do not have the carers to deliver it.

Significant work has been undertaken to address the waiting list for home support in this region. We continue to make every effort to increase capacity and fulfil our service requirements through recruitment of staff to approved Health Care Assistant Home Support posts which have been sanctioned for filling. Since the introduction of the current recruitment pause, derogation has been sought and granted for a total of 49 Health Care Assistant staff. There is a Health Care Assistant Home Support panel in place in both Cork and Kerry for the purpose of recruitment and approved posts are being offered on a continuous basis.

I trust this clarifies the position. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Jackie Daly
Head of Service for Older People

