

24<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Deputy Pat Buckley, T.D.,  
Dáil Éireann  
Dublin 2

**PQ ref 34107/23:**

**“To ask the Minister for Health if his Department is aware of a new shift work teams project in the Cork and Kerry home support services which is to begin in June this year and that this new initiative involves rotating five people within the teams over a four-week period (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter”.**

**Details Supplied: I have been contacted by numerous families recently who have raised their serious concerns regarding this proposed system as it will move away from a person centred care to a rotation of different carers instead of the old system of the one to one style care. What's alarming here is, that a person with dementia or Alzheimer's could now be facing at least 16 different carers in a month which will be extremely confusing for these vulnerable people and again moves away from the person centred model. Secondly , Covid and the Flu have not gone away and the dangers and risk to our most vulnerable will surely increase when you have so many different carers showing up in peoples homes and surely this increases the risk of infection. Carers who have cared for people over the years could also be facing loosing those patients due to this new system and this will be detrimental to those with Dementia or Alzheimer's as it will take away all those years of trust and familiarisation between carer and patient. Those with cancer or other underlying health conditions could possibly be facing a greater risk of infection from these new proposals as an increased turnover of staff each week will surely increase the risk of cross contamination. So I ask the Minister for Health, to ask the HSE why it has totally moved away from the HSE Home Support Service for Older People 2023 model and will the HSE reverse their decision to change the model of homecare in Cork and Kerry.**

Dear Deputy Buckley,

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

The HSE's Home Support service is an important component of the provision of service to older people with assessed needs which supports them in their choice of living in their own home and community.

The HSE, in consultation with staff representative groups, reviewed the Home Support staff contracts and it was agreed that staff would be assigned to work bases and would also be paid for the time which they spend travelling to and between service users. This is a national agreement and we are obliged to comply with same. It is a welcome development as it treats the Home Support Health Care Assistants on a par with other healthcare staff.

When finalising the implementation plan for the rollout of the revised contract, it was necessary for us to review the assignment of staff to our clients and over time introduce new rosters in this region in order to maximise the face to face time with service users. Health Care Assistants now operate in

teams working to a set roster arrangement over a four-week period to allow for services to be facilitated, the covering of leave etc. In the delivery of service and the implementation of rostering, the HSE recognises the care needs of our clients and endeavours to minimise disruption to service and undue stress while these new arrangements are introduced. We have kept these teams where possible to a cohort of four staff. Within the current model it is not possible to reduce the team composition below four in order to ensure they are effective.

The Home Support service is a valuable component of our care delivery and we are constantly working to improve it. The service will always endeavour to facilitate a client's wishes and personal preferences where possible. The Home Support service will, where possible, try to ensure that a client's current Health Care Assistant continues to deliver some of their support whilst equally ensuring that the remainder of their service is delivered by similarly qualified and professional Home Support staff.

We are confident that these changes, once they are fully implemented, will mean that the service will be even better placed to deliver the care that people need and depend upon. Our Home Support Resource Managers are available to discuss any issues that may arise. Successful implementation has already taken place in other areas across this region and we have found that, once the initial set up period has taken place, our clients have adapted well to the new arrangements. Our staff will endeavour to ensure that any changes are introduced as seamlessly as possible.

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

Yours sincerely,



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Jackie Daly  
Head of Service for Older Persons

