

**Head of Service for Older Persons**  
HSE South West - Health Service Executive  
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**Ceann na Seirbhíse do Dhaoine Scothaosta**  
FSS Iardheiscirt - Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Teach Caha, Párc Ghnó & Teicneolaíochta  
Bóthar na Modh Feirme, Corcaigh  
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10<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Deputy Marie Sherlock, T.D.,  
Dáil Éireann  
Dublin 2

**PQ ref 15076/25**

**“To ask the Minister for Health the actions she is taking to increase HSE home support hours for the elderly following a report that CHO 4 has had a waiting list of over 1,000 since 2022, which is the highest currently in the country; and if she will make a statement on the matter”.**

Dear Deputy Sherlock,

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.

HSE South West understands that for most people, home is the preferred location for care. The home support service is highly valued by service users and their families because it enables older people to live independently and with dignity in their own homes for longer. Improving access to this service is a priority.

The HSE Home Support department in this region is the largest provider of home care in Ireland and even with the large number of Health Care Assistant staff that we have, we constantly require more staff because there is an ever-increasing demand for our service.

As you will be aware, we have been experiencing considerable difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff with certain areas experiencing increased pressures. Approved private providers, who work with the HSE in fulfilling Home Support service requests, are also experiencing similar issues. Furthermore, there has been an ongoing level of retirements and resignations from the Health Care Assistant (Home Support) workforce across the region in recent years. This is in part due to the age profile of the workforce and also due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic with a number of HCSAs have opted for alternative careers.

HSE South West's geographical area encompasses Kerry and Cork, covering approximately 16,390 square kilometres and serving a population of more than 700,000 people. The challenges that can present in our more rural locations are well documented in contrast with higher density urban areas which have access to a wider pool of prospective staff when recruiting Home Support Health Care Assistants. Service delivery is consequently more clustered in areas with higher population densities. Delivery of home support is also easier to roster in urban areas when travel times are shorter between clients and can be assisted by public transport. Private providers, who assist the HSE in delivering home support, are also more plentiful in urban locations.

The aforementioned challenges and difficulties mean that we are often unfortunately forced to maintain a waiting list for our service requests in some areas. This is not a funding issue, it is a workforce availability issue. Capacity is and has been an on-going issue within the home support service, for both the HSE and for our approved private providers. Nationally, budget spend on home support has increased year on year. To have the budget but to be short of carers is frustrating for families and for this organisation.

Those people who are on the waiting list have been clinically assessed and the waiting list is regularly reviewed. When availability arises, it is allocated according to the chronological and prioritisation ranking of each individual. All of our offices are delivering as much support as they can within available capacity in the face of staff shortages (which can arise not only because of resignations or retirements but also because of unscheduled or unexpected leave). We strive to maintain service for those who already have secured support while also doing our best to deliver new or additional support to as many clients as possible.

In order to meet the growing demand for home support and enhance our capacity to deliver same, HSE South West continues strident recruitment efforts in the Cork region in the face of an often challenging employment environment. In the HSE South West Region we have two dedicated recruitment coordinators for Health Care Assistants (Home Support) with campaigns running throughout the year. The most recent recruitment campaign for Health Care Assistants (Home Support) staff was undertaken in this region in January which, following screening and interview, identified 86 potential candidates for Cork and Kerry positions. Pending completion of recruitment checks, the outcome of this campaign will be utilised to address requirements in the Home Support Service across the region.

HSE South West is committed to promoting respect and dignity for all older people and ensuring that all of our service users live well and safely. We will continue to work in tandem with senior management to identify strategies to reduce our waiting lists. Our population is growing and it is also ageing and this means that demand for home support services is projected to increase substantially. Improving access to home support in the Mid Cork area and the wider region is a service priority for HSE South West and, to this end, we will consider and utilise all available avenues to fulfil our service requirements.

I trust this clarifies the position and 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

