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9th April 2019

Deputy Scanlon, TD
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Scanlon,

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 13689/19

To ask the Minister for Health if he will extend homecare support services to include public holidays; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

The 2019 National Service Plan 2019 provides for the following;

- 17.9m home support hours to be delivered to 53,000 people inclusive of 410,000 hours/550 home support packages funded under the Winter Initiative 2018/2019
- Intensive Home Care Packages delivered to approximately 235 people with approximately 360,000 hours delivered in the full year

Home Support Services are an important component of the provision of service to older people with assessed needs and to support them in their choice of living in their own home and community. The HSE, working within its available resources, has sought to maintain and when possible to expand the range and volume of services available to support people to remain in their own homes, to prevent early admission to long term residential care and to support people to return to their homes following an acute hospital admission. The Home Support resource is used to its maximum effect as part of each individual recipient's care plan.

The demand for the Home Support Services, and for additional supports through the Intensive Home Care Package Scheme, continues to grow as the population of older people expands and as many more older people with complex care needs are maintained at home. As well as the demand for additional service levels, the need for services outside of core hours Monday to Friday is also increasing.

While the resources available are substantial, and every effort is being made to provide people with the services at the times and on the days they are required, the resources are nonetheless finite. The provision of hours of service in the evenings and particularly at public holidays and at night, results in an increased cost of service delivery and the capacity of the HSE to achieve targeted levels of service becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. Clients are prioritised for service provision at the weekends, public holidays and out of hours.

The HSE is obliged to manage the overall service delivery within the resources available. Professional staff on the front line who are aware of local circumstances, as well as undertaking the initial needs assessment, also undertake care needs reviews so as to ensure that services are targeted at those clients with a high level of dependency and in accordance with their assessed need. If a client's need changes, the client or carer can request a review by contacting the local health office.

The Department is currently engaged in a detailed process to determine what type of home care scheme is best for Ireland. This process will consider the future design of both the funding and regulation systems for these crucial services.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Jordan

**On Behalf of:
Sandra Tuohy
Assistant National Director
Older Persons Services - Operations**