



Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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18th December 2023

Deputy Pauline Tully,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: pauline.tully@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Tully,

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: 54533/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the estimated cost of providing 100,000, 200,000 and 500,000 additional personal assistance hours for people with disabilities, respectively; 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.

PA Service

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. Individual's needs are assessed against the criteria for prioritisation. 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 home support 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 other support services already provided to the person/family.

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 is committed to protecting the level of Personal Assistant and Home Support Services to support 10,000 individuals to maximise their capacity to live full and independent lives and in 2022 the targets set in the NSP were exceeded with the delivery of 1.75 million hours of PA Services (above the target by +2.7%) and 3.37 million hours of Home Support Services (+8% above target for the year).

The current level of PA service includes an over 15% increase in PA hours totalling 270,370 hours in the National Service Plans since 2020 as follows:

- 2020 = 40,000 additional hours of personal assistant supports
- 2021 = 40,000 additional hours of personal assistant supports
- 2022 = 120,000 additional hours of personal assistant supports
- 2023 = 70,370 additional personal assistant hours.

The table below details the funding allocated to PA and Home Support Services in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. Funding allocated has increased year on year. It is important to note that PA supports are funded alongside Home Support Service provision.

Service area	Budget 2018	Final 2019	Final NSP 2020	Final NSP 2021	Final NSP 2022
	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000
PA & Home Support	80,957	84,909	93,885	100,613	109,809
Total Funding Allocated	1,772,300	1,903,625	2,049,500	2,209,719	2,347,380

Increased investment by Government in recent years is welcome. The HSE will lead the work to improve how the resource is allocated and used to provide this essential support for people to live an independent life.

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 also established a Personal Assistance (PA) Review Group to develop a model of service, scope and access criteria.



The HSE has contributed to the development by Government of the Capacity Review of the Disability Sector (2020) and the draft Disability Action Plan 2024 – 2026. These set out the future service needs and how they might be addressed. They incorporate the dual development goals to (a) increase the range of hours available to individuals already in receipt of some PA support and (b) increasing the hours available to make the service available to more people.

This report will be used by the Working Group being established to improve this important service, as well as making a valuable contribution to the service planning process.

Future Planning

As referenced above, with regard to additional PA 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 just published *Action Plan for Disability Services 2024 – 2026*, prepared by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, includes a commitment to “Greater access to Personal Assistance and Home Supports to promote independence and participation” with an aim to deliver 800,000 additional Personal Assistance hours.

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.

Costs

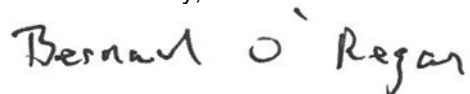
The first and full year cost of providing 100,000, 200,000 and 500,000 additional Personal Assistance Hours for people with disabilities is as follows:

€2,500,000, €5,000,000 and €12,500,000 per annum based on rate of €25 per hour.

NB: It is important to note that the disability Home Support tender is expected to be reviewed in 2024, which will likely result in an increase in the core rate in line with older person services. Indications are that the new revised rate will likely have to increase to same €31 per hour as has been approved for Older Person's Home Support Services.

This is due to cost pressures and allied staff recruitment and retention issues being experienced by providers. In this scenario, the first and full year cost of providing 100,000, 200,000 and 500,000 additional Personal Assistance Hours for people with disabilities is as follows: €3,100,000, €6,200,00 and €15,500,000.

Yours Sincerely,



**Bernard O'Regan,
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations**

