Head of Service for Older Persons
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare
Health Service Executive
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13th February 2024

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae. T.D.,
Dáil Éireann
Dublin 2

PQ ref 3966/24
"To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on a matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter".

Details Supplied: Has the HSE began hiring home help staff again. What steps are being taken to ensure there are enough staff to cover the areas in Kerry where there are patients approved but on a wait list pending staff coming available?

Dear Deputy Healy-Rae,

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.

Despite a 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. Cork Kerry Community Healthcare continues to endeavour to deliver a home support service to as many clients as possible in the face of a challenging employment environment, an increasing demand for home support, competition with the private and voluntary sectors to access the same skilled workforce and the recent pause on recruitment.

Across Cork and Kerry there are currently in excess of 7,500 people receiving a Home Support Service. 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 a lack of carer availability in the area.

When a request for service 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 availability, then the request is sent out to the private providers and if any of those providers has capacity the service will be delivered by them. However, increasingly our private providers are experiencing similar recruitment and retention issues to ourselves, particularly in our more rural locations, resulting in some applications being waitlisted until availability arises within either sector (HSE or private).

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 significant work has been undertaken to address the waiting list for Home Support in

Kerry with priority being given to those requiring discharge from hospital and with higher levels of dependency.

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare continues to recruit staff to approved Health Care Assistant Home Support posts which have been approved 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 across the region. 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.

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 is a service priority for Cork Kerry Community Healthcare and, to this end, we continue to make every effort to increase capacity and 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,

Jackie Daly
Head of Service for Older People