



**Oifig an Stiúrthóir Cúnta Náisiúnta,**  
Foireann Míchumais Náisiúnta,  
An Chéad Urlár - Oifigí 13, 14, 15,  
Àras Phlásóg na Rós, Coimpléasc Gnó na hOllscoile,  
Páirc Náisiúnta Teicneolaíochta,  
Caladh an Treoigh,  
Luimneach.

**Office of the Assistant National Director,**  
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31<sup>st</sup> October 2024

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Dear Deputy O'Callaghan,

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: 39870/24**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the estimated full-year cost to the Exchequer of aligning disability home support pay rates with older persons' services.*

## **HSE Response**

### **Home Support Authorisation Scheme**

In August 2023, the HSE's Older Persons Services implemented an Authorisation Scheme for the provision of Home Support. This Authorisation Scheme for Home Support Services for Older Persons does not include Disability Services (DS) within its scope. A new arrangement is required to provide a compliant service for Disability Services. The development of a Disability Home Support Procurement Framework was referenced in the HSE's National Service Plan 2024.

Home Support provides personal and/or essential domestic care and support for individuals with disabilities within their home and are primarily provided by service providers under service arrangement with HSE Disability Services.

Disability Services need to safeguard Disability Home Support services and service arrangements, to ensure they meet the current active demand noted in DSMAT and through this, ease demand on the overall system which includes a pressurised residential service and to enable individuals with disabilities to live at home, in line with UNCRPD Article 19.

Additionally, the government is proposing new Home Support regulations across all service for adults over 18 and the government's Disability Action Plan 2024 -2026 states a key priority is achieving "Greater access to Home Supports to



*promote independence and participation.*” Ensuring a Disability procurement framework is in place will be an essential component to support both initiatives.

The General Scheme of the Health (Amendment) (Licensing of Professional Home Support Providers) Bill 2024 is at an advanced stage and will introduce a licensing framework for home support providers who will be required to meet minimum requirements set out under Ministerial regulations in order to provide a home support service in Ireland.

These regulations, currently in final draft, define home support services and set out their scope. The publication of the regulations is expected in the near future, date to be confirmed. This licensing framework will provide for independent statutory oversight and the development of national quality standards by HIQA. HIQA have indicated that they will be commencing stakeholder consultation on the national standards for home support in Q.3 2024.

Moving forward, the HSE does not anticipate a reduction in home support services demand and costs due to a number of factors:

- An ageing disability population with increasing complex needs
- An increase in the number of service hours required for clients. Note- 2023 delivery output was 3,443,656, 13.6% (323,656 hours) over target, which is indicative of the significant demand for this service.
- 607 persons identified on DSMAT requiring Home Support, with an average of 425 hours per year.
- The government’s Disability Action Plan for Disability Services 2024 -2026 has set a target of 110,000 extra Home Support hours over 3 years.
- The need to ease pressure in the system and prevent and reduce admissions into Emergency Residential and Nursing Home placements and to reduce the level of need for Respite services.
- A rising level of inflation (therefore an increasing cost base).
- An increase in the cost base (cost of living).

### **Disability Home Support Procurement Framework Objectives**

The Disability Home Support Procurement framework will aim to:

- To provide nationwide home support services to Disability clients with such requirements, where direct service provision is not available;
- To ensure that the highest quality service providers are contracted to provide the best quality service to clients until such time as a statutory scheme is available;
- To ensure a compliant arrangement (Authorisation Scheme) is in place with competitive rates to optimise opportunities around economies of scale ensuring best value for money for the HSE;
- To assist in the reduction of delayed discharges at times of critical capacity in Acute units;
- To assist in hospital egress and the reduction of delayed transfers of care;
- To meet growing demand for home support services and Sláintecare/HSE objectives of increasing access to care and supports at home and in the community thus reducing the requirement for long-term residential care, nursing home care and acute services.
- To support New Home Support regulation and the Government’s Disability Action Plan 2024 to 2026.

### **Planned Approach**

Currently Disability Services have local agreements in place for service provision with Home Support agencies (including consortia), across each of the 9 CHO that span the 6 new Health Areas.

Moving forward, the planned approach to the market will be via the Authorisation Scheme model similar to that of the Older Persons Service, whereby all suitably qualified applicants that submit required documentation will be invited on to the Scheme.

The Authorisation Scheme will encompass both Selection and Pass/Fail Criteria. The Selection Criteria will be based upon a number of factors including financial, professional, experience. Pass/Fail Criteria will encompass the manner in which the services that can be offered by the Providers. As the process will be operated via an Authorisation Scheme, unsuccessful Applicants will be in a position to re-apply to the Scheme on a periodic basis.



The authorisation model will be open-ended, therefore new entrants to the market may apply to join at any stage, periodically. For the avoidance of doubt, contracts awarded to Scheme members will be for a defined period.

It is planned that Service Providers that are already qualified on the OPS Scheme will be accommodated, with a mechanism that takes this into account alongside specific Disability requirements.

### Progress to Date

The development of the framework has significantly progressed, with the drafting of required documentation and the establishment of the following project governance structures which are proceeding with their required actions:

- **Oversight and Steering Group** – consisting of the Assistant National Director for Disabilities, Finance, HSE Sourcing and Contracts and Disability Heads of Service.
- **Project Support Team** – consisting of HSE Procurement Lead and National Disability Services Team members.
- **Commercial Evaluation Team** – consisting of Procurement Category Specialist and Disability Finance.
- **Procurement Evaluation Group (PEG)** – consisting of representatives from HSE Procurement, National Disability Services, Disability General/Case Managers from each of the 6 Health regions, Disability Finance, Quality and Clinical Leads

Currently the Service Specification of Requirements, Service Response and Standard Operating Procedures documentation have been drafted and reviewed by the Procurement Evaluation Group. Following any required amendments, this documentation will then require to be approved by the Procurement Evaluation Group and the Steering Group.

A consultation session was held on the 21<sup>st</sup> October with Disability Umbrella organisations. Feedback from this session will be applied, where appropriate, to the service specification documents. Additional consultation sessions, including with service users, are under consideration.

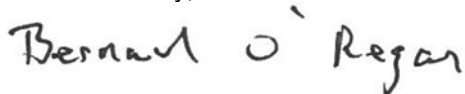
Once consultations are complete, documentation updated and signed off, HSE procurement will be in a position to initiate the tender process, with a proposed date to be agreed. This date will be dependent on a written mandate from the department on an agreed Home Support rate for disability services.

The estimated set up cost of the new Home Support Office is approximately 2.9m. This is subject to change and does not include rate change costs.

The Action Plan for Disability Services 2024 – 2026 advises that 110,000 extra home support hours a year is required by 2026 to address shortfall in services and to support individuals with disabilities to live a fuller more independent life and participate in normal activities in the community, in line with UNCRPD Article 19.

110,000 hours @ new rate of €31.40 per hour (which includes the 1.4% increase in place since August 2024) is approximately €3,454,000, however this does not include rate change costs in the event of rate change due to statutory alignment with Older Persons Services.

Yours sincerely,



**Bernard O'Regan**  
**Assistant National Director**  
**National Disability Team**

