



2nd October 2024.

Deputy Róisín Shortall,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Shortall,

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 37103/24

To ask the Minister for Health the reason for the decision not to fund additional home care hours for existing service users who have been clinically assessed as needing them; if the necessary funding will be provided to reverse this decision; the engagements he has had with the HSE in respect of this matter; to clarify if this will be applied nationwide; if not, the CHOs impacted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. - Róisín Shortall

The Home Support Service is funded by Government to deliver a volume of service each year as approved in the HSE National Service Plan. It is a non-statutory service and access to the current service is based on assessment of the person's needs by the HSE, having regard to the available resources and the competing demands for the service. The volume and type of service provided to each client is based on individually assessed care needs and will vary dependent on the needs identified and the resources available to meet those needs.

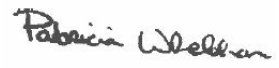
Demand for home support continues to increase due to population growth and the increasing dependency of the growing numbers of people aged ≥80years, within the over 65 years' cohort. Despite the growth in home support service delivery capacity remains an issue. Recruitment and retention of home support staff for both direct and indirect service provision remains a significant challenge leading to capacity issues across CHOs. In the context of increasing demand, priority is given to those being discharged from acute hospitals who are in a position to return home with supports and to those in the community with acute needs. Funding approval is expedited across the system to ensure minimum waiting times.

The latest preliminary data available reflects the period to end of August 2024. As of this date, 4,592 people were waiting for a carer to be assigned nationally. Of those, 2,038 were waiting on a new home support service, while 2,554 were already in receipt of a service but waiting on a carer to deliver additional hours. As of same date, the number of people assessed for Home Support and waiting on funding approval was 0, and has remained at this level since June 2023.

Given that the Home Support service is a non-statutory service and is provided for on a clinically assessed basis, resources are finite. In addition, the HSE aims to provide a home support service to all those assessed as requiring same and endeavours to meet its obligations in the shortest timeframe given the ongoing resourcing constraints being experienced throughout the sector.

Please note 2024 data quoted is preliminary and may be subject to change. Data return rate at 31st August 2024 YTD was 96.9%.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Patricia Whelehan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Patricia Whelehan
Assistant National Director
Services for Older People, Access and Integration