

Press release

HCCI concerned that reform of the home care sector is too slow

As the home care worker recruitment crisis deepens and waiting lists lengthen HCCI urges the Government to leverage adaptability & pace of private providers

HCCI outlined various initiatives that Government has committed to but where the pace of progress is extremely slow:

- **Statutory Home Support Scheme** due to be implemented in 2023 which seems unlikely now as the opening of the National Home Support Office has been delayed to Q3/Q4 this year
- **Cross Departmental Workforce Advisory Group** is due to return recommendations to Minister Butler by September 2022
- **Pandemic Bonus for carers** the latest timeline from the Department is payment within 4-6 weeks (from now). We sincerely hope this won't be missed as it is affecting staff morale.

15 June 2022, Dublin: Home and Community Care Ireland (HCCI), the organisation representing private home care providers, is concerned that reform of the home care sector is progressing far too slowly. HCCI stressed that sector reform needs to happen at a much faster pace within both the Government and the HSE to ensure people get the support they need to stay living at home and that the Statutory Home Support Scheme will be implemented next year as promised by the Government.

HCCI is urging Government to leverage the adaptability and pace the private sector can bring to the sector, as highlighted in [publicly available data¹ compiled by HCCI](#). This data shows a correlation between communities where a higher proportion of home care is delivered by private providers or non-profits in terms of shorter waiting lists and successfully delivering the targeted number of care hours. The data suggests that using private and non-profit providers substantially increases capacity.

Joseph Musgrave, CEO, HCCI, "Progress is at a snail's pace. Whilst there has been a range of plans to develop certain elements of the sector, progress in implementing these have been limited and home care has not always been a priority within the HSE and across Government. This must change. Appropriate engagement and support for Minister Butler's initiatives from other ministers and key stakeholders in Government is critical to move the agenda forward at pace. Failure to do so will create some real challenges to the sustainability of these vital services for our most vulnerable."

In February HCCI stated that home care was amid the most acute recruitment crisis ever experienced in the sector's history and there has been little improvement since.

Joseph Musgrave, CEO, HCCI said, "The Government says that it supports a 'home first' policy but its actions, or lack of, says the opposite. Our providers are still experiencing significant challenges recruiting carers and clients are facing lengthy waiting lists² for a home carer. We need the Government to prioritise home care so that our older and more vulnerable citizens can get the support they need to stay in their own homes and communities. To give one example of reform urgently needed - while nursing homes and

¹ The paper used three key metrics to assess a Community Health Organisation (CHO) performance, the split between directly delivered by the HSE and indirectly delivered care (through profits and non-profits), waiting lists as a percentage of people aged 65 and older and the variance between home support targets and actual delivery.

² Waiting list data as at end April: Assessed and waiting on funding approval: 302. Assessed, approved and waiting on care staff: 5,326.

hospitals are permitted to recruit carers from non-European Economic Area countries, home care providers are prohibited from doing so. This is despite the EU endorsing migrant workers as being crucial to the care sector. We urgently need this legislation changed before waiting lists grow any longer.”

“Another example of home care being put to the bottom of the list is the ongoing delay in paying the Pandemic Bonus to home carer workers. This is affecting morale of home carers, who do so much day in day out in every community across the country. We sincerely hope that this will be paid within 4-6 weeks as promised by the Minister.”

HCCI has suggested workable solutions to the home care recruitment crisis:

1. **Recognition and Career Progression:** There should be a graded career structure in home care so that care workers can advance their careers and benefit from the rewards of taking on increased responsibilities that follows in other lines of work. HCCI would like Minister Butler’s Cross-Departmental Workforce Advisory Group to make interim recommendations on the recruitment crisis this month at the latest to inform Budget 2023.
2. **Access to the Sector:** There should be more training options for home care workers, with earn-as-you-learn models such as apprenticeships. As well as allowing non-European Economic Area workers to join the home care sector HCCI says that changes should be made to social welfare entitlements to allow home care workers to take on additional hours without fear of losing their medical card or other such supports.
3. **Pay & Conditions:** HCCI believes that home care workers should be paid a minimum of the living wage and that this should be included as a condition of the next Home Care Tender. HSE sets the conditions of the market. That carers do not receive payment for travel, except in rare circumstances, results from the current procurement practice.

The Government has committed to implementing the Statutory Home Support Scheme in 2023. Urgent action is needed if that deadline is to be met.

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About HCCI:

HCCI is the representative body for the home care sector. It currently represents 30 member companies (with 100 offices nationwide) who among them employ 10,000 carers and provide a managed home care service to 20,000 older and vulnerable people in Ireland. HCCI advocates for the highest standard of regulated home care services to be made available to all on a statutory basis, enabling as many people as possible to remain living independently within their homes and communities.

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