

**Home & Community Care Ireland
Submission to Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health
Wednesday May 30, 2018**

Good morning Chairman and Members,

Thank you for inviting Home & Community Care Ireland to address the Committee today. I am Ed Murphy, a Director of HCCI and I am joined here by my fellow Director, Ed Crotty. Our chairperson Orlaith Carmody extends her apology, as she has a long-standing engagement abroad.

Home & Community Care Ireland, which was established in 2007, is the representative body for private home care providers, with 70 members, employing an estimated 12,000 Home Carers, providing care to over 20,000 clients. Some of our members are locally owned and managed home care providers and some members are the Irish branches of established international home care franchise companies. As a consequence, some HCCI members have a network and exposure to international best practice.

HCCI is governed by a Board of six member Directors and has an Independent Chairperson.

One of the greatest challenges facing our economy is our ageing population. Every 15 minutes someone in Ireland turns 65 and every 30 minutes someone turns 80.

In light of the health service's struggles with long hospital waiting lists and the Government's stated policy of removing 'bed blockers', by promoting more care in patients' homes, there is an unprecedented demand for home care services. According to the report from the ERSI, "Projections of Demand for Healthcare In Ireland 2015 – 2030", demand for home care will increase by 50% in the next eleven years.

As currently stated, the Department of Health acknowledges that it is unable to keep up with demand. Approximately 4,600 people are on waiting lists for home care (this includes new applicants and those waiting for additional hours).¹ While the Fair Deal Scheme obliges the State to provide nursing home places for eligible people, home care is allocated on the basis of resources, which means many people take up a nursing home place because they cannot afford or cannot find home care.

According to the Healthy Ireland report of 2017, Planning for Health, the requirement for home care packages is expected to rise by 70% by 2031, resulting in an additional 11,000 home care packages (HCPs).

¹ Department of Health (2017) as before; p.8.

As Members of the Committee are aware, this issue was highlighted in the 2017 RTE documentary *We Need to Talk about Dad*, by broadcaster, Brendan Courtney. A poll carried out by Amárach Research, in light of the documentary found that 85% of people wanted to be cared for in their home.

In respect of care workers, we estimate that 40,000 people are employed in home care across the public, voluntary and private sectors. However, the sector is facing enormous problems retaining current carers, because of working conditions and a lack of professional respect; and has the impossible task of finding 25,000 new carers as a matter of urgency.

There is a global crisis in home care, with a recent BBC Panorama programme suggesting that one million new carers will be needed in the UK, and this is confirmed by our partners in these markets.

It is a reality that home care in Ireland is facing a crisis. Urgent steps need to be put in place.

Currently there is no regulation of any description in the home care industry. In the absence of regulation, HCCI is the only body that submits to independent auditors and operates a self-governing framework.

HCCI's approach to home care is based on providing a fully managed, relationship and outcome based, home care service to every client who needs it. Every client is professionally assessed. Every carer is Garda vetted, trained, insured, managed and supervised, thereby ensuring the highest standards of care for the client. In addition, HCCI believes it delivers value for money to the Irish taxpayer and is committed to continuing this practice.

The immediate concerns of the industry - as highlighted in the seven policy and legislative challenges identified by the Oireachtas Library and Research - are a lack of regulation or any standardisation of service throughout the country, which are urgently needed to provide safeguarding for the most vulnerable members of our society.

In light of the aforementioned, HCCI is calling for the following measures to be adopted:

1. **Home care to be introduced on a statutory basis**, mirroring the legal entitlement to funding for long-stay care available through the Nursing Home Support Schemes.
2. **An independent authority (such as HIQA) to be introduced to implement regulation and standards** to drive quality and safe delivery of care to home care clients.
3. **Change HSE commissioning procedures to allow care workers operate a workable block weekly schedule with travel costs included.** Many carers need support from the Department of Social Protection. Currently if these Carers works just half an hour a day, as often occurs under current commissioning practices, they lose their full daily social welfare entitlement.

4. **The introduction of a national register of trained and qualified home care practitioners, which protects both carers and clients.**
5. **The combining of current budgets for Nursing Home Care and Home Care.** This would entail the HSE offering expanded home care packages to offer full choice to clients and the opportunity to live independently in the dignity and comfort of their own home for as long as possible.
6. **Nationwide implementation of Client Directed Home Care (CDC).** This would involve offering a monetary contribution towards an individual's home care needs, allowing them to choose their own provider – i.e. public, private or voluntary.

(All of these points are expanded further in HCCI's Position Paper which you will have already received and which is the additional reading material to this presentation).

In summary, Home & Community Care Ireland stresses that recruitment and retention of workers is a crisis in the home care sector. We welcome the opportunity to offer insight and co-operation in bringing urgent change to bear on the legislation, regulation and commission of home care, in order to significantly expand the workforce.

We thank the Committee for today's invitation which is particularly timely as the HSE tender for home care services is now live. Should these services be renewed under the existing arrangements, none of the recommendations we have set out here today, to provide governance and significantly raise standards of service to vulnerable clients, will be implemented for the next few years, thus deepening the crisis. You, as public representatives, need to be aware of this, and to do all that is in your power to prevent the situation from worsening.

Every Irish citizen who is ageing, or who has a care requirement, should have the right to remain with dignity in their own home for as long as possible, safeguarded by the state. We, and every member in this house, would expect that as a minimum standard for our own parents or loved ones.

Thank You.