

Opening Statement to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health

December 12th 2018

Care Alliance Ireland (Liam O'Sullivan, Executive Director)

I would like to thank the joint committee for the invitation to attend this morning – I will share my time with my colleagues from the Alzheimer Society of Ireland and the Irish Wheelchair Association.

Care Alliance's focus is on family carers and on supporting our member organisations and others to better support such carers. For many families, state funded home care provision can be a key support in keeping people well at home. I refer you to our recent report on home care published in October, copies of which I have here.

[http://www.carealliance.ie/userfiles/file/Briefing%20Paper%20%20Web\(1\).pdf](http://www.carealliance.ie/userfiles/file/Briefing%20Paper%20%20Web(1).pdf)

I am glad to say there is much consensus on home care; the importance of it, the good value it represents and the likely future demand for it. On the latter point the 2017 ESRI report speaks of the need for a 70% increase in home care support by 2030 from a current provision of 17 million hours to an estimated 30 million hours.

We welcome the Department of Health review of home care but are concerned about its slow progress to date. We, alongside a group of over 20 other NGO's are engaging actively with the relevant department officials in articulating a vision for the future of home care – and we in Care Alliance appreciate that it will take political courage to grapple with the challenging issues of funding.

I know the committee last week discussed the HSE budgetary overruns – and to put it in context – the likely acute hospital overrun of €225m – represents over 50% of the entire home care budget for 2018.

Finally, I would echo Minister Daly's comments at this very committee last week about the unhelpful dominant narrative of hospital trolleys – and that the focus needs to be more on how long people are waiting for a service – and specifically a home care service. We have asked the HSE to include this as a key metric in their 2019 service plan.

Thank-you.

T +353 1 874 7776 E info@carealliance.ie A Coleraine House
W www.carealliance.ie Coleraine Street
Dublin 7, Ireland
DO7 E8X7

Registered Company No
461315
Charity Registration No
20048303
CHY No 14644



The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (Pat McLoughlin, CEO)

Dementia Specific Homecare Services.

I will focus my submission on the outcome of two important research projects which highlight the particular problems faced by carers arising from the lack of support for home care and carers and the lack of community facilities which could ease the burden on carers if services were available.

The De-Stress Study into Spousal Carers (2017)

1. In 2010, family carers and friends, provided 81 million hours of care, saving the State €807m.
 2. 15% had given up their jobs to care for their spouse.
 3. 79% stated they provided 81-100% of the care for their spouse.
 4. On average they had cared for their spouse for 5 years at the time of assessment.
 5. Only 50 % had received home help in the previous 30 days.
 6. The other 50% received an average of 34 hours in total in the previous 30 days.
 7. Only 1 in 4 had received carer training.
 8. 71% had 2 or more health conditions at once, including arthritis, hypertension and diabetes.
 9. One third had fairly bad sleep quality and a further 9% reported very bad sleep quality.
 10. About 37% of carers reported clinically significant depressive symptoms.
 11. 20% of carers themselves possibly had problems with cognitive functioning.
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Joint HSE/Alzheimer mapping project of dementia specific community based services (2018)

1. A range of quality community based services could greatly improve the social health of persons with dementia and ease the burden and time required by family carers.
2. Services available range from 23 in CHO 3 ,compared to 44 in CHO1.
3. Only 41% of day centres for persons with dementia operate on a 5 day basis.
(in some cases this might be a single day service in a week for each individual)
4. 20% of day centres only operate 1 day a week.
5. 14% of centres operate 2 days a week.
6. Wexford ,Laois and Leitrim have no day care centre ,denying an estimated 1,953 the opportunity of accessing such a service.
7. €12m would provide a minimum range of basic services for each county which would triple the amount of services available.
8. It is estimated that by 2046,the number of persons living with dementia in Ireland will rise from 55,000 at present to 150,000.

Irish Wheelchair Association (Joan Carthy, Advocacy Officer)

The Irish Wheelchair Association would like to thank the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health for the opportunity to express our views with regards to how the delivery of home care services can be improved in Ireland.

At a time when the ability to provide home care services is crucial to ensure that individuals are not occupying hospital beds for longer periods than required and they are not being transferred to inappropriate nursing home settings, a sustainable model of home care service needs to be implemented.

The immediate challenge to the effective delivery of home care services in Ireland is the lack of availability of staff to deliver the service. One of the key factors identified as causing difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff is the short duration of shifts and lack of job security. These factors make the role of a Homecare Worker unattractive.

IWA would strongly suggest that a new method of contracting services is considered, with a view to employing staff for a fixed number of hours, a minimum of 20 per week. This would obviously require an entirely new way of allocating and funding homecare services.

Also, as the current model of service operates by CHO area and each CHO area has a large number of approved providers, resulting in providers being offered dispersed hours of service across a large area. It would be a more effective model of service if a small number of providers were offered a greater number of hours in smaller catchment areas.

This would allow providers to be more focused on recruiting and setting up services in targeted areas.

For home care services to have a real impact, clients should be allocated a minimum of an hour service at a time, anything less than this will not allow for a meaningful service.

Historically home care services merely focused on tasks that address the service users’ domestic and physical requirements. We welcome the HSE initiative of developing a Customer Directed Homecare model of participation. The IWA, as the leading organisation providing personal assistant services for people with physical disabilities we are aware, at first hand, how beneficial this approach can be in providing quality services, which makes a real and meaningful impact on the life of the person receiving the service.

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight these issues.