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## HIQA Call for Regulation on Homecare Sector

A quick note that may be of interest on the Homecare sector for the older community from as discussed by HIQA today and the Irish Times yesterday.

- Homecare is an essential, and increasingly in demand, service which allows people to receive health, social and personal care within their home.
- In the programme for government last year, the Fianna Fáil-Fine Gael-Green Coalition promised a statutory homecare scheme.
- A spokeswoman for Mary Butler, Minister of State for Older People, said work is “ongoing” on a statutory scheme with a pilot programme to reform the service due to start later this year.
- In a statutory regime the service would expand. It would also subject providers to independent regulation for the first time and become eligible for funding under the Fair Deal scheme, currently limited to nursing homes, in which a portion of the value of a person’s home would be used to pay for their care.
- The European Commission recently highlighted the State’s “over-reliance” on informal care, and warned that the adoption of new formal schemes as people grow older will be very expensive.
- Current homecare services are underfunded and undersupplied.
- “Pre-pandemic figures show over 7,000 people on the wait-list for homecare supports.
- The current funding model incentivises residential care even though it is much more expensive than homecare.
- “The disparity in funding levels between the Fair Deal scheme and the total HSE allocation for home supports is self-evident: in 2018 and 2019 the total budgets allocated to the nursing home-support scheme were €962 million and €991.4 million respectively while €412 million was allocated in 2018 and €446 million in 2019 to was directed to home supports.
- Despite the push for more homecare, thousands of additional nursing-home places will still be needed as the ageing of the population intensifies. Economic & Social Research Institute projections point to the need for 15,600 new places by 2030 above 2015 levels, when there were some 22,340 spaces in private homes.
- Prof O’Shea, the NUI Galway academic, says homecare will never replace residential care. “That’s simply not going to happen. The big challenge is to really make sure that we accelerate this shift to ageing in place, which for many people is in their own homes but there are many variations... Before you go into residential care there’s housing with care, for example, where people may have to shift out of their home but not into residential care.

- There are five types of special housing for older people: nursing homes are institutions with permanent staff and service areas; sheltered housing is linked to such institutions, some with staff and service areas; older-people housing provides homes with staff and service areas; general older-people homes have no staff or service areas; and private-care accommodation consists of homes for people with extensive needs for services and care.
- The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) has called for immediate reform, including the introduction of regulation, of Ireland’s homecare services.
- HIQA says now is an opportune time for Ireland to take a different approach to the funding, procurement and delivery of all health and social care services, including homecare services.
- HIQA has advocated that the homecare sector needs a complete overhaul given the uneven distribution of homecare services and the absence of a statutory footing.
- “Most people in Ireland would prefer to age and receive care in their own home. However, homecare operates in complex conditions influenced by funding, availability and geography. The current homecare system is not sustainable and is not meeting the needs of people, with some vulnerable people unable to avail of support in their home. Furthermore, homecare services are not currently regulated to establish and ensure their quality and safety.
- Government spending on long-term care was 1.3 per cent of gross domestic product in 2019, and is forecast to rise to 1.6 per cent of GDP by 2030 and 2.4 per cent by 2050. According to the commission, a 2050 “risk scenario” could see spending reach 3.2 per cent of GDP.

<https://www.hiqa.ie/hiqa-news-updates/hiqa-calls-regulation-homecare-services>

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/homecare-services-in-dire-need-of-regulation-watchdog-warns-1.4755444>