Advancing a Home Support Worker Career Pathway

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Contact Information:

For any further information about this White Paper please contact:

Leading Healthcare Providers (LHP) Skillnet at research@lhpskillnet.ie

Or

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland elizabethmorrow@rcsi.ie or maryalynch@rcsi.ie

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Contributors

Commissioners

Ms Carmel Kelly, Network Manager, Leading Healthcare Providers (LHP) Skillnet co-ordinated this research initiative and contributed to interpreting the evidence.
Ms Clodagh Kileen, Learning and Development Project Manager, LHP Skillnet co-ordinated this research initiative and contributed to interpreting the evidence.

Research Team

Dr Elizabeth Morrow, Visiting Research Fellow, Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery (FNM), Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), was Lead Researcher for the scoping review, drafted the Green Paper, and drafted this White Paper.
Prof Mary Lynch, FNM, RCSI was the Principle Investigator for the study and oversaw project delivery, and quality assurance.

Expert Advisors

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Dr Llinos Haf Spencer, FNM, RCSI, checked the proof of this White Paper.

Definitions

Home support worker:

A 'Home Support Worker' (HSW) is an individual employed to provide support to a person (client or service user) in their private residence, which may be a permanent or semi-permanent residence for one or more occupants.

Home support:

'Home support' includes all forms of enabling support provided to or for a person, who by reason of illness, frailty, or disability needs such support to be able to live at home. Home support, also known as home care, domestic support or social care in different contexts, might be provided by the state, through supplier contracts, or via private arrangements.

Career pathway:

A 'career pathway' is a structured plan that lays out the series of positions, skills, and experiences individuals need to progress within a particular industry or profession. It serves as a navigational tool, guiding individuals through the steps, education, training, and professional development opportunities necessary for career advancement. Career pathways are designed to align workforce development with organisational goals and societal needs, ensuring that talent development meets both individual aspirations and broader strategic objectives. By fostering skill development and promoting retention, career pathways contribute to economic growth and social mobility, ultimately leading to positive outcomes for individuals, organisations, and communities alike.

Knowledge workstreams:

A 'knowledge workstream' refers to a distinct area of time-limited work that involves planned tasks requiring expertise and specialised knowledge. These workstreams typically involve activities such as analysis, problem-solving, decision-making, innovation, and collaboration. Knowledge workstreams are led and carried out by professionals or experts in fields such as research, development, practice, management, and voluntary and community organisations. Each knowledge workstream focuses on achieving an aspect of an overall goal.

Abbreviations

ADL	Activities of Daily Living
AFI	Age Friendly Ireland
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CORU	(not an acronym) Regulating health and social care professionals in Ireland
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DEPR	Department of Public Expenditure
DoH	Department of Health
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DSP	Department of Social Protection
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
HCCI	Home and Community Care Ireland
HIQA	Health Information and Quality Authority
HSE	Health Service Executive
HSW	Home Support Worker
HCSW	Healthcare Support Worker
IHF	Irish Hospice Foundation
IADL	Instrumental Activities of Daily Living
ICS	Integrated Care System
ICT	Information Communication Technology
MDS	Minimum Data Set
NHI	Nursing Homes Ireland
NHS	National Health Service
SOLAS	(not an acronym) State agency for the further education and training sector in Ireland
SWAG	Strategic Workforce Advisory Group
SWIG	Strategic Workforce Implementation Group
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Executive Summary

Purpose and Context

This *White Paper on Advancing a Home Support Worker Career Pathway* offers strategic recommendations based on comprehensive research and stakeholder consultations. Its aim is to inform and encourage policymakers, researchers, provider organisations, and home support workers (HSWs) across Ireland and beyond in ongoing efforts to address workforce expansion and sustainability in the home support sector.

This White Paper focuses on setting out an action plan for advancing a career pathway – which will be crucial for expanding and enhancing the workforce in the context of rising demand for home support.

This initiative is imperative due to the aging demographic in Ireland. Population statistics from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) indicate that the over 65 age group accounted for approximately 14.4% of the total population in 2021. This is projected to nearly double to approximately 27% by 2051. Population aging and changes in societal attitudes are generating a surge in the need for home support services. This trend is expected to persist as more individuals opt to age in place at home in their community. The type of home support services required is also changing as more people have complex and/or long-term health conditions and are more likely to be living on their own.

Establishing a structured career pathway for home support workers is essential for alleviating current workforce shortages across Ireland and taking action now for the future. This initiative aims to enhance the appeal of home support as a career choice by providing clear avenues for training and professional growth, as well as diversifying opportunities for work, skill development, and career advancement within the sector. Such initiatives not only seek to address immediate staffing supply challenges but also cultivate a sustainable and dynamic workforce capable of meeting the evolving needs of aging populations in the forthcoming decades.

A career pathway is defined as a structured plan that lays out the series of positions, skills, and experiences individuals need to progress within a particular industry or profession. It serves as a navigational tool, guiding individuals through the steps, education, training, and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities necessary for career advancement. Career pathways are designed to align job roles and workforce development with organisational goals and societal needs, ensuring that talent development meets both individual aspirations and broader strategic objectives. By fostering skill development and promoting retention, career pathways contribute to economic growth and social mobility, ultimately leading to positive outcomes for individuals, organisations, and communities alike.

This White Paper acknowledges and aligns with ongoing multidisciplinary collaborations in the sector. Notable amongst these is the Department of Health (DoH) led Strategic Workforce Implementation Group (SWIG) on Home Carers and Nursing Home Healthcare Assistants, which is working to address the 16 recommendations put forward by the Strategic Workforce Advisory Group (SWAG) on Home Carers and Nursing Home Health Care Assistants[1]. Progress has already been made on recruitment, pay and payments for travel/time, terms and conditions, barriers to employment, training and professional development, sectoral reform, monitoring and evaluation[2]. The proposals in this White Paper focus on informing and extending the progress on advancing a career pathway, in line with

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[1] Report of the Strategic Workforce Advisory Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Health Care Assistants https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/237210/448892b3-36b4-4b7a-a41e-90368ff2345c.pdf#page=null
[2] Progress Report of the Strategic Workforce Implementation Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Healthcare Assistants – October 2023. 275876_c0889fbf-3f9c-4235-9e79-e1240790fac7.pdf

Recommendation 10 of the SWAG[3]. This White Paper focuses on HSWs but there is good reason to believe that a career pathway could also be valuable for nursing home healthcare assistants and other types of new support roles that will be increasingly necessary to meet the diverse types and levels of needs of an ageing population.

This White Paper proposes to establish four focused knowledge workstreams (KWs) as a structure to underpin and guide this essential area of change across the whole sector across Ireland. It emphasises actionable steps to advance a career pathway over a minimum indicative 18-month timeframe. The proposals do not include a fixed start date but do stress the urgency of acting now for the benefit of clients, carers, HSWs and the longterm sustainability of the healthcare system.

Case for Change

Population demographics[4] and changes in societal attitudes (e.g., more people live alone and don't have family members living near to them) are two key reasons behind a surge in the need for home support services. More people are choosing to age in place in their homes and communities choosing care closer to home. The range of types and levels of support that are required in the home setting is changing. More and more people have complex and/or long-term health conditions.

A 2023 Green Paper on Home Support Workers[5] set out the complex context of challenges facing the home support sector in Ireland. In summary, major challenges include:

- **Supply challenges across the whole home support sector**: lack of strategic retention and recruitment to support roles, lack of data collection and strategic decision-making, economic pressures, staff safety and wellbeing, equality and quality of care, training and development, and collaboration and integration with other sectors.

- **Retention and recruitment difficulties for home support service providers**: staffing concerns, enhancing careers within funding constraints, quality of care issues, integration challenges, provision of training and CPD, and data collection deficiencies.

- **Challenges for individual HSW's**: economic pressures of low pay, unpaid travel time and costs (although this is covered for some HSWs), unreliable work hours/times, lack of recognition, stigma/low attractiveness of the sector, accessing training and development opportunities, safety concerns, ensuring quality of care delivery, and overcoming barriers to collaboration.

The proposals in this White Paper cannot address all of these complex challenges. Its focus is on outlining clear actions that can be taken now to advance a career pathway for HSWs in Ireland. These actions correspond with developments internationally to build robust home support services. They are designed to complement existing workforce development initiatives in Ireland, including the implementation of the recommendations of the SWAG on training and professional development (SWAG, Recommendation 10).

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[3] Strategic Workforce Advisory Group (2022), Recommendation 10: A competency framework for home-support workers and healthcare assistants should be developed to enable the recognition of prior learning and qualifications, to support career-development, and to align grades of employment with qualifications with relevant regulations. For example, providing recognition of those with specialist qualifications in reablement, dementia, and end-of-life care. Page 19.

[4] https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/hubs/p-opi/olderpersonsinformationhub/ageingpopulation/

[5] Green Paper on Home Support Workers. Royal College of Surgeons Ireland for Leading Healthcare Providers Skillnet. (2023). https://www.lhpskillnet.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Green-Paper-on-Home-Support-Workers-Leading-Healthcare-Providers-Skillnet-December-2023.pdf

Scope of the Career Pathway

This White Paper puts forward proposals that build on the best currently available evidence and stakeholder views on advancing a career pathway. Key aspects of a career pathway should be:

Roles and responsibilities:
- Promoting a range of home support roles, highlighting career opportunities and success
- Defining core competencies and role descriptions, to prevent role drift and ensure safe practice
- Introducing more advanced and specialised roles to broaden the workforce's capabilities
- Using the career pathway to transition to sustainable ageing-at-home models that address the population's changing needs

Career progression:
- Establishing clear criteria for career progression that can be linked to pay grades (in line with Recommendation 10 of the SWAG[6])
- Implementing transparent structures and centralised resources for career support and advancement
- Promoting professionalism and rewarding staff for acquiring advanced skills

Training and development:
- Promoting digital skills and digital literacy for improved practice and enhanced home support
- Facilitating access to training and professional development with recognition and rewards
- Improving access to leadership, governance, and management training at all levels

Quality careers:
- Enhancing staff retention through improved early career support and supervision
- Developing standardised best practice and innovative approaches to HSW safety, inclusion, and peer support
- Integrating supervision, in-service learning, and quality improvement into the career pathway

Data and analysis:
- Data on client needs and service demand
- Data on workforce supply, roles, and skillsets
- Data on service provision, delivery, and quality

Proposed Knowledge Workstreams

To develop and implement a comprehensive career pathway, this White Paper proposes four knowledge workstreams and suggests what the key components of these workstreams should be. This approach will facilitate coordinated investigation, planning, and development for the whole sector, while breaking down the work into manageable focused areas.

In each of the four knowledge workstreams it is crucial to consider the economic implications and benefits of each suggested key component, including the potential costs and benefits for individual HSWs, employers/organisations, the health service, and social value. Issues of equality and

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[6] Report of the Strategic Workforce Advisory Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Health Care Assistants https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/237210/448892b3-36b4-4b7a-a41e-90368ff2345c.pdf#page=null

opportunities to promote workforce inclusion, diversity and equity (e.g., inclusive recruitment and fair compensation) should also be addressed when developing each of the workstreams.

In summary, the four knowledge workstreams and their key components are as follows:

Knowledge Workstream 1: Competency Framework Development

- Building on the evidence and demand for home support, develop and promote a comprehensive competency framework for career development across all levels within the sector. This should be broad enough to encompass roles from direct home support to leadership positions (from pre-service to early career, advanced, specialist, and expert levels), with a focus on retention of skills and knowledge within the sector.
- Ensure the competency framework encompasses different types of health and social support roles, as well as emerging roles in home support (e.g., new roles in companionship, supported social interaction, home comfort and safety, mobility and functional health, e-health/telehealth support, and delegated interventions). Ensure workforce coverage of skills and knowledge required for new responsibilities, including support for digital health and self-management and carer engagement/liaison.
- Ensure each role in the framework is thorough and inclusive, covering appropriate technical skills, interpersonal skills, health/clinical knowledge, and professional behaviours for each role. Facilitate ongoing professional development tailored to each role's level.
- Integrate competencies related to safety, emergency preparedness, and quality improvement into the career framework, offering Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities tailored to the various career levels.
- Review pay scales and grades to align with the competency framework and levels of skills and training, maintaining parity with comparable sectors (in line with Recommendation 10 of the SWAG[7]).
- Evaluate minimum qualifications for each role and develop strategies to support current staff in obtaining necessary qualifications or demonstrating equivalency.
- Develop national and local strategies to enable access to advanced training and specialist roles for more experienced staff. Promote mentorship programmes and peer support networks for career advancement.
- Explore mechanisms to ensure competency attainment and support career progression within organisations, including supervised learning, access to CPD, and career advancement tracking systems.

Knowledge Workstream 2: Connecting the Career Pathway to Multi-pronged Workforce Solutions

- Establish dynamic cross-sector connections focused on advancing a career pathway and workforce planning, addressing critical areas such as dementia and end-of-life support while not overlooking the home support needs of children and young people, and people with disabilities.
- Utilise client data to identify gaps in support services and enhance client interactions, integrating digital solutions and greater emphasis on supported self-management.
- Provide insights from the career pathway development to inform broader workforce solutions, including recruitment strategies and competency assessments.

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[7] Report of the Strategic Workforce Advisory Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Health Care Assistants https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/237210/448892b3-36b4-4b7a-a41e-90368ff2345c.pdf#page=null

- Explore innovative workforce models like team-based support and e-health/telehealth to efficiently address client needs and expand home-based support to meet different levels of client need more effectively.
- Analyse international service provision models to optimise task delegation (under the appropriate training and level of supervision from healthcare professionals) and adapt to evolving client needs, strengthen support at transition points (e.g., hospital to home), and fostering more opportunities for supported self-management and carer engagement.
- Implement more inclusive and flexible working arrangements to attract and retain talent across career levels, supported by actions to ensure fair pay and job security.
- Evaluate pay and incentive models to enhance retention and recruitment efforts across different experience levels and job roles.
- Integrate economic perspectives into the career framework to assess training programme costs and benefits for individuals and employers.
- Evaluate the potential establishment of a National Register for Home Support Workers to facilitate channels for CPD, career development and retention in the sector.

Knowledge Workstream 3: Digital Technology Integration and Data

- Assess the current digital landscape in the home support sector, including initiatives like electronic health records and e-health/telehealth platforms, to improve communication and service delivery. Identify barriers to technology adoption and how the career pathway can support implementation of digital health and assistive technologies in the home environment and home support services.
- Research and consult on a digital minimum data set (MDS) to inform career pathway development, workforce planning, and investment in the sector. Determine responsibility for updating and sharing information and address issues related to technology procurement and maintenance.
- Consider the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies on home support workers' training, service organisation, and client care. Identify ethical, economic, and health implications for HSWs, provider organisation, clients and carers.
- Conduct economic evaluations to understand the financial implications of digital integration in care models and workforce training. Address barriers to implementation, including digital skills development, while ensuring technology enhances working practices and job satisfaction, rather than replaces human care.
- Develop national web-based career development systems linked to certification and registration systems to align role definitions, qualifications, and career progression with training and compensation.
- Explore digital learning environments to promote career development through access to core skills and advanced training, and to encourage best practices in care organisation and safety.
- Utilise digital technologies to facilitate collaboration and knowledge exchange among HSWs, fostering peer support and sector-wide coordination (e.g., HSWs feeding into policy decision-making and best practice).

Knowledge Workstream 4: Stakeholder Engagement and Expert Guidance

- Facilitate stakeholder engagement in the development of the career pathway by involving a diverse range of sector, service, and client stakeholders in decision-making processes to ensure alignment with societal needs and priorities. Utilise platforms such as the HSE-led 2024 survey of HSWs to gather valuable stakeholder input into development of the career pathway.

- Establish a communication strategy and channels for stakeholders to provide ongoing feedback and input throughout the development and implementation process. Maintain continuous engagement with sector stakeholders to address any additional feedback or concerns.
- Seek expert input internationally on workforce development and career building to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of proposed solutions for Ireland, drawing on insights from the Green Paper.
- Develop best practice guidance on the development and implementation of the career pathway for the home support sector, ensuring accessibility for different audiences.
- Provide guidance on inclusive recruitment strategies to improve employer recruitment practices for different HSW role types and levels, emphasising career progression, continuous learning, and upskilling opportunities. Address issues such as inflexible job criteria, recruitment in rural areas, and strategies for addressing workforce deficits in areas where demand exceeds supply.
- Develop best practice guidance and coordinate updates on home support safety, emergency preparedness, and service quality improvement approaches in the home setting.
- Establishing the policy pathway to ensure government links with academic institutions and training providers to develop Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for reliable provision of education and learning in the sector.

Next Steps

A minimum indicative timeframe for work on these proposals could be 18 months, as follows:

1. Dissemination (Months 1-2) – LHP Skillnet and RCSI
- Widely disseminate this White Paper to key stakeholders.
- Convene a stakeholder roundtable meeting to discuss this White Paper and career pathway development.
- Contribute to public and professional awareness activities for home support sector reform.

2. Resourcing (Months 1-3) – Owners and Supporters
- Discuss resourcing needs and clarify associated costs.
- Secure a budget and/or allocate suitable resources for White Paper implementation.
- Identify the organisation(s) responsible for overseeing the work.

3. Chairs and Leads Appointment (Months 4-5) – Responsible organisation(s)
- Appoint 16 knowledge workstream joint leads (policy, research, practice, public). Of these 4 leads should be nominated or appointed to act as Chair for each knowledge workstream.
- Establish communication procedures and reporting structures.

4. Implementation (Months 5-17) – Knowledge Workstream Leads
- Form knowledge workstream groups and delivery teams.
- Include HSW and client representatives within each knowledge workstream.
- Set timelines and deliverables for progress tracking.

5. Monitoring (Months 5-17) – Knowledge Workstream Leads
- Establish monitoring mechanisms and key milestones.
- Develop central reporting framework for transparency.

6. Evaluation (Months 15-18) – External Evaluator
- Conduct comprehensive evaluation of implemented initiatives.

- Review impact and effectiveness of initiatives and recommend adjustments and recommendations for follow-on activities and sustainability of change.

Conclusion

This White Paper serves to contribute to a concerted approach to expand and elevate Ireland's home support sector. It focuses on driving change through developing a comprehensive career pathway for the sector, defining roles and competencies from pre-service to early career, advanced, specialist, and expert levels. This will help to build a robust and skilled workforce and retain staff, talent and expertise in the sector.

Collaborative leadership, resourcing, and multi-sector working are crucial in driving forward the four proposed knowledge workstreams. The proposals emphasise direct involvement of HSWs and clients in decision-making. For each knowledge workstream, the rationale, significance, key components, implementation and integration, are outlined and progress should be evaluated independently.

Grounded in evidence and extensive stakeholder input, this White Paper highlights possible directions for action, and clear steps to shape a future where every individual receives the highest standard of home support.

Section 1: Purpose and Context

Introduction

This *White Paper on Advancing a Home Support Worker Career Pathway* is a strategic document that sets out proposals for change that are based in extensive research evidence and diverse stakeholder perspectives. The intended audiences for these proposals are policymakers, researchers, provider organisations, and home support workers (HSW's), representatives for HSWs, clients/service users, families and caregivers. The focus is on Ireland but there are insight and suggestions that people in other countries and contexts might find beneficial. It provides clear proposals to address vital needs for workforce growth and sustainability in the future, ensuring that career paths align with changing population demographics and needs.

This White Paper recognises that strategic efforts, continuous improvements, and novel changes are already happening within and around Ireland's home support sector (detail in section 2). These contributions include the new regulatory framework for home support providers and the statutory home support scheme. However, due to scale and significance of the issues facing the sector it is imperative that policy, research and practice work even more closely together, and expand these discussions across departments and sectors, and in partnership with HSWs, clients/service users, families and caregivers.

Coordinated workforce planning and development across the whole home care sector is imperative, to ensure that Ireland is equipped to address the needs of an ageing population. Waiting lists for home support are escalating daily and the system is under pressure due to rising numbers of people needing support as well as inefficiencies in the system. No person who needs home support, young or old, should miss out or be left behind because of where they live, their personal characteristics, or their health status. Everyone's human rights and safety should be protected to the utmost.

This White Paper is focused on achievable concerted action in the next 18 months to improve the system for HSWs and clients, as well as building better centralised career support and development structures for the whole sector. Of course there are many ethical, economic, technical and practical challenges and opportunities to address. But these need to be addressed urgently to avoid further problems down the line. Cross-sector teams will need to work through the different challenges and opportunities that exist, including ways to encourage the digital transformation of home support work and facilitate inclusion of home support in integrated care systems (ICS). How best to address each challenge in relation to developing a career pathway is built into this White Paper's proposals.

From its inception this project has been inclusive and collaborative, with stakeholder consultation playing a central role in interrogating and adapting the best evidence internationally to the Irish context. This White Paper aims to streamline the information and evidence that has been gathered and analysed over the course of the project. The weblinks to the Green Paper and other supporting information are provided in annex 1, illustrating the robust development of this White Paper and sources of input into the process.

Scoping Review of the Literature

The proposals here are developed from the Green Paper 2023[8]. They are based on an extensive scoping review of the international research literature. The review was undertaken by researchers in the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery (FNM), Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. It drew together robust research evidence on the emerging global challenges and opportunities in home-based support, highlighting the role of HSWs in addressing societal needs of an ageing population.

The scoping review used key terms for HSWs and career pathways and was conducted following the Joanna Briggs Institute scoping review method. This involved systematically searching electronic databases (Web of Science, PubMed, MEDLINE, EMBASE, CINAHL, PsycINFO, Social Care Online, Social Sciences Citation Index). Inclusion criteria were applied, and a thematic analysis followed an inductive-deductive approach. The review identified 261 relevant articles from different countries. Four overall key themes were identified: 1) Data-driven decision-making on the future workforce, 2) Attracting and developing a competent and motivated home support workforce, 3) Enhancing working lives and retention at every stage of career pathways, and 4) Crafting career pathways to improve quality and impact.

The findings demonstrate that leadership, collaboration, and data-driven decision-making across policy, research and practice are pivotal for expanding and enhancing home support. Emphasising a shift towards preventative self-management models, supported by digitally skilled and regulated HSWs, could enhance independence and quality of care as well as healthcare system sustainability. Clear career structures, professional development, and inclusive organisational environments are essential to retain, attract, and empower a competent and motivated workforce, fostering quality and impact. It provides foundational evidence to establish career pathways for HSWs, identifying key areas for development such as data collection, care model transformation (e.g., integrated care systems, interprofessional working), career progression structures, and systems for safety and quality improvement.

Summary of Feedback on the Green Paper

The feedback on the Green Paper (received Jan-Feb 2024) plays a vital role in contributing to the case for change and the proposals. The feedback highlights key issues, concerns, and the urgency for specific initiatives that promote and build HSW careers.

Stakeholders from various organisations provided feedback that underscores the following points:
- **Age Friendly Ireland (AFI)** emphasised workforce development, standardised guidance, financial incentives, collaboration for integrated care, inclusive recruitment practices, and prioritising staff wellbeing.
- **Department of Health** acknowledged the significance of developing a career pathway for home support workers to tackle workforce challenges in the health and social care sector, highlighting the need for a competency framework and multi-pronged solutions.
- **Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)** advocated for national standards, improved information management practices, prioritisation of service user involvement, upskilling initiatives, and balanced digital enhancements.

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[8] Green Paper on Home Support Workers. Royal College of Surgeons Ireland for Leading Healthcare Providers Skillnet. December 2023. https://www.lhpskillnet.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Green-Paper-on-Home-Support-Workers-Leading-Healthcare-Providers-Skillnet-December-2023.pdf

- **Home and Community Care Ireland (HCCI)** suggested setting timeframes and priorities for sector change, involving HSWs in decision-making, urgency in implementation, and addressing barriers to action.
- **Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF)** highlighted the importance of end-of-life care training, integrated care, and addressing gender inclusion in the workforce.
- **Nursing Homes Ireland (NHI)** emphasised the necessity for government leadership in driving collaboration and policy integration, comprehensive research for informed decision-making, practical interventions for aging at home, employee engagement, and sector-specific approaches.
- **Orpea Care** recommended clarifying HSW roles, conducting digital skills assessments, establishing a career progression framework, and implementing diversity initiatives.
- **Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)** focused on engaging client/service users and reviewing entry requirements for HSWs.

Overall, the feedback on the Green Paper aligns with the international research evidence and confirms the importance of collaboration, research, training, and the involvement of HSWs and clients/service users in developing a comprehensive career pathway. This feedback underscores the timeliness and significance of advancing career opportunities amidst the growing demand challenges and supply difficulties within the sector. It highlights the urgent need to create pathways for building successful careers in home support, aligning with the imperative to address workforce shortages and cater to the rising demand of aging populations.

Sections of this White Paper

Section 2 sets out the case for change, summarising the sector challenges, existing initiatives, evidence, views and perspectives that cand be used to advance a career pathway for HSWs.

Section 3 outlines the four proposed knowledge workstreams and for each explains the rationale, significance, key components, implementation and integration the home support system.

Section 4 provides a suggested timeline of activities in the next 18 months, focusing on dissemination of the proposals, building collaboration, implementation of initiatives, monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusions are made and a call to action is issued.

Annex 1 provides links to Supporting Materials that underpin this White Paper.

Section 2: Case for Change

Overview of the Sector Challenges

Figure 1 illustrates the current picture of the home support sector in Ireland. It provides a macro view of the wide range of stakeholders involved, from individual clients and HSWs, up to whole organisations, government and the wider public. The figure illustrates some of the challenges and tension points in the current system that stakeholders describe.

Figure 1: Macro view of Ireland's home support sector, stakeholders and tension points

Looking more closely at this complex picture of home support in Ireland it is evident that there are a range of challenges at whole sector, service provider and individual HSW levels.

Key challenges for sector development are:

- **Workforce Retention and Recruitment**: Challenges related to retaining and attracting a competent and motivated home support workforce, including issues with low pay and loss of social security benefits, job satisfaction, career progression, and stress/burnout.
- **Data Collection and Decision-Making**: Challenges related to the lack of centralised data collection systems for workforce planning and development of home healthcare services (e.g., remote healthcare/digital health, hospital at home) and home support sectors.
- **Economic Challenges**: Challenges related to establishing cost effective funding models and commissioning structures. Economic sustainability of funding home support. Limited economic evidence on training and CPD, pay and reward structures, to inform investment decisions regarding the growth of the workforce and retention of existing HSWs. Moving forward, the need for research activities to include economic evaluation based on rigorous methods is critical.
- **Safety and Wellbeing**: Challenges related to ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and job satisfaction of HSWs and clients, including the need for policies and practices to safeguard their rights.
- **Quality of Care**: Challenges related to fostering quality and impact in home support work, including the need for effective home-based interventions, staffing models, and integration/interfacing with ICSs and the wider health system.
- **Training and Development**: Challenges related to accessible and affordable education and training for HSWs, including the need for core competencies, advanced training, and leadership development (practice and managerial) as well as in-service training, and carers support.
- **Collaboration and Coordination**: Challenges related to promoting collaboration and coordination between HSWs, service providers, and other professions and sectors to enhance quality and efficiency of care and support systems.

Key challenges for home support service providers are:

- **Retention and Recruitment**: Difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled HSWs due to factors such as attaining qualification, lack of attractiveness of the sector as a career choice, challenges of being able to offer career progression opportunities and higher rates of pay for skilled workers, lack of resources and structures to be able to offer career development support (e.g., mentorship) or opportunities for in-service training.
- **Funding and Economic Pressures**: Challenges related to task-time funding models, resource allocations that do not support collaboration between HSS. The need for robust economic research to interrogate economic inequalities impacting the provision of home support services across areas.
- **Staffing Policies and Safety**: Challenges in developing staffing policies and optimising the structural organisation of care, to prioritise staff and client safety, job satisfaction, and retention.
- **Quality of Care**: Challenges in ensuring the quality and impact of home support services, including the need to develop a broader range of effective home support interventions, improving role clarity for different types of HSW roles, recognising the importance of more advanced and leadership roles within the sector, and systems to ensure safe practice.
- **Integration into Health Systems**: Challenges in integrating HSWs in teams and home support provider organisations into ICS and wider health systems (e.g., social prescribing networks,

private, community and voluntary health providers) to promote collaboration for quality and efficiency.
- **Training and Development**: Challenges in providing accessible CPD and higher-level skills development opportunities for HSW to enhance their practical competencies, digital skills and leadership capacity in the sector.
- **Data Collection and Decision-Making**: Challenges related to the lack of comprehensive data about the home support sector, hindering informed decision-making and workforce planning at a strategic level (i.e., HSE/public and private providers).

Addressing these challenges is crucial for the home support sector and home support service providers to deliver high-quality care, support an expanding workforce, and meet the growing demand for home based support services in Ireland, particularly in the context of shifts towards more integrated healthcare systems and care closer to home.

Challenges for HSWs and those considering a career in the sector are:

- **Motivation and Attraction**: Prospective HSWs may not feel the sector is a good career choice for them or see the sector as a place where individuals feel valued and are paid fairly. Individuals may be put off by job specifications or lack required specific qualifications. They may be put off by a lack of clear terms and conditions or the formality of recruitment practices. Key issues affecting attraction and retention in the sector are a lack of job security, lack of flexibility/regularity of the work, insufficient or lack of guaranteed hours, lack of career progression opportunities, occupational safety and job satisfaction.
- **Training and Development**: Individuals may face challenges in accessing essential skills training. The time and costs involved in attaining required qualifications can be off putting, even if employers do provide help with access to training. Lack of opportunities for career progression and upskilling in advanced and client-specific needs could feel like the work is meant to be a short-term, stop-gap job rather than a skilled career or profession. Training providers may not recognise training needs or understand the nature of home support work.
- **Safety and Wellbeing:** Individuals may fear, or face, challenges related to ensuring their own safety, wellbeing, and job satisfaction, particularly travelling between clients and working in isolation in people's homes for long periods or entering unfamiliar areas.
- **Being Able to Deliver Quality**: Individuals may face challenges in providing high-quality care and support to clients, including having time and skills to address different levels of client needs, supporting self-management, coping with death or bereavement, and integrating digital technologies for enhanced care delivery.
- **Collaboration and Coordination**: Individuals who often work alone with clients may face challenges in fostering collaboration and coordination with families, with colleagues or managers, or professionals from other sectors to enhance quality, efficiency, and client outcomes.
- **Economic Pressures**: Lack of robust economic data on the challenges individual HSWs and prospective HSWs may face, such as low pay, zero hours contracts, workforce planning, staffing, which can affect job satisfaction and retention.

It is important for individuals considering or already working in the home support sector to be engaged in finding solutions to these challenges. As well as being clear that a career pathway will be a focal point for new policies and practices that support their safety, wellbeing, and professional development, as well as opportunities to improve the quality of care provided to clients.

Alignment with Existing Initiatives and Priorities

In developing this White Paper, significant emphasis was placed on learning from the research evidence, taking into consideration developments in other nations, and tailoring the proposed work to existing initiatives and priorities in Ireland. The focus is on enhancing and augmenting ongoing workforce development efforts with focused knowledge and development around a career pathway for HSWs.

Key related initiatives internationally are:

- Health Research Board (HRB)'s evidence brief, The Role, Function, and Supply of Home Care Workers in Four European Countries (2022)[9]
- Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy 2026 (2018)[10]
- A Healthier Wales: Our Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care (2020)[11] and Social care workforce delivery plan 2024 to 2027 (2024)[12]
- National Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care in Scotland (2022)[13]
- The Care Workforce Pathway for adult social care in England (2024)[14]

Key initiatives to support sector growth in Ireland are:

- Health Service Executive's (HSE) National Service Plan target has risen accordingly in recent years, from 17.9 million home support hours in 2019, to 22 million hours in 2023[15]. HSE's 2024 target remains at 22m home support hours provided to 54,100 people, with targets set for each Community Health Organisation (CHO areas 1 to 9) profiled across the 12-months.
- The Department of Health (DoH) has reviewed the funding model for home support and Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI, 200) have projected demand for statutory home support services, 2021.
- While the legal reform of the home support sector is still in progress[16], efforts are underway to establish a more robust regulatory framework for home support services in Ireland[17].
- The multi-agency SWAG plays a crucial role in providing recommendations and insights to address challenges within the home support sector. One of the 16 recommendations highlighted by the group is the need for a transformative shift to rapidly expand and enhance the home support workforce[18].
- The DoH led SWIG on Home Carers and Nursing Home Healthcare Assistants is addressing the 16 recommendations put forward by the SWAG[19]. Progress on Recruitment, Pay and

[9] gov - Evidence Brief: The role, function, and supply of home care workers in four European countries (www.gov.ie)

[10] https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/health-and-social-care-workforce-strategy-2026

[11] https://socialcare.wales/cms-assets/documents/Workforce-strategy-ENG-March-2021.pdf

[12] https://socialcare.wales/about-us/workforce-strategy/social-care-delivery-plan-2024-to-2027

[13] https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2022/03/national-workforce-strategy-health-social-care/documents/national-workforce-strategy-health-social-care-scotland/national-workforce-strategy-health-social-care-scotland/govscot%3Adocument/national-workforce-strategy-health-social-care-scotland.pdf

[14] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-workforce-pathway-for-adult-social-care

[15] https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/kpis/2023-older-persons-nsp-metadata.pdf

[16] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/56ab1-draft-regulations-for-providers-of-home-support-services-an-overview-of-the-findings-of-the-department-of-healths-public-consultation/

[17] https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/olderpeople/national-guidelines-and-procedures-for-the-standardised-implementation-of-the-home-support-service-hss-guidelines.pdf

[18] Report of the Strategic Workforce Advisory Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Health Care Assistants https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/237210/448892b3-36b4-4b7a-a41e-90368ff2345c.pdf#page=null

[19] Strategic Workforce Advisory Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Healthcare Assistants - Implementation https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/66dd1-strategic-workforce-advisory-group-on-home-carers-and-nursing-home-healthcare-assistants/

conditions, Barriers to employment, Training and professional development, Sectoral reform, Monitoring and evaluation, was reported in October 2023[20].

- The HSE is leading (owner) on Recommendation 10 Training and professional development: "A competency framework for home support workers and healthcare assistants should be developed to enable the recognition of prior learning and qualifications, to support career development, and to align grades of employment with qualifications in line with relevant regulations. For example, providing recognition of those with specialist qualifications in reablement, dementia, and end-of-life care." This element of the implementation work[21] is supported by DoH, DFHERIS and SOLAS[22].
- In "Resourcing our Future"[23] (p.46) the HSE commits to creating competency frameworks/eligibility criteria for roles within Healthcare Support Assistant and Healthcare Assistant job categories. As of October 2023, initial scoping of this recommendation had commenced and can be informed by information gathered during the scoping review that informs this White Paper (see Annex 1).

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[20] https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/275876/c0889fbf-3f9c-4235-9e79-e1240790fac7.pdf#page=null
[21] Appendix VII (p.32) https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/237210/448892b3-36b4-4b7a-a41e-90368ff2345c.pdf#page=null
[22] SOLAS is the State agency that oversees the building of a world class Further Education & Training (FET) sector in Ireland. https://www.solas.ie/
[23] https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/hrstrategiesreports/hse-resourcing-strategy.pdf

The box highlights key reports about the home support sector in Ireland.

Demand for the Statutory Home Support Scheme (ESRI, 2021)

A statutory scheme for the financing and regulation of home support services is a key Sláintecare reform proposal. This Economic and Social Research Institute report entitled "Demand for the Statutory Home Support Scheme" was funded by the Department of Health to inform the development of a home support scheme. The report estimates the potential demand for home support if a statutory scheme were to be introduced under various policy scenarios. It underlines the significant increase in the demand for home support in the coming years and need to expand the workforce.
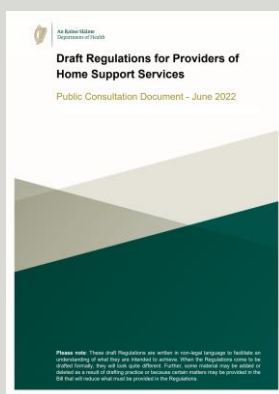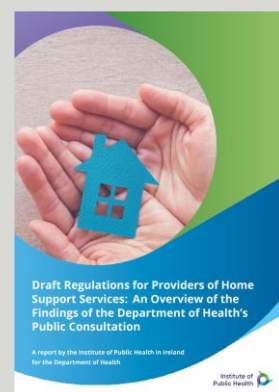

Draft Regulations for Providers of Home Support Services. Public Consultation Document (Department of Health, 2022)

The Draft Regulations for Providers of Home Support Services outline comprehensive guidelines for delivering quality care to service-users in their homes. The document covers principles of service-delivery, staffing requirements, corporate governance, and oversight. It emphasises the importance of clear communication, proper record-keeping, and safeguarding service-users. From defining service objectives to detailing staff qualifications and training, these regulations aim to ensure safe, effective, and person-centered home support services.
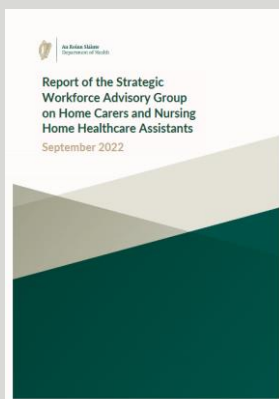
Report of the Strategic Workforce Advisory Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Healthcare Assistants (Department of Health, 2022)

The Strategic Workforce Advisory Group was established by the Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People, to examine strategic workforce challenges in publicly and privately provided front-line carer roles in home support and nursing homes. The report presents a suite of 16 recommendations spanning the areas of areas of recruitment, pay and conditions of employment, barriers to employment, training and professional development, sectoral reform, and monitoring and implementation. The report identifies a need for the development of a competency framework (linked to training, qualifications, grades of employment and pay-rates) to support career-development.

Draft Regulations for Providers of Home Support Services. An Overview of the Findings of the Department of Health's Public Consultation (Institute of Public Health, 2023)

The public consultation on the draft regulations opened on 16 June 2022 and closed on 04 August 2022 and was undertaken to inform the development of the legislation for Providers of Home Support Services. Over 200 responses were received from individuals and stakeholder-organisations. Three-quarters (74%) of survey respondents believed the impact of the proposed regulations would be positive. Creating a more qualified workforce with clearer career pathways was seen as a benefit for home support workers with potential to make the sector more attractive long term.

Evidence, Views and Perspectives to Inform a Career Pathway

Evidence for a Career Pathway

Evidence is that a career pathway for HSWs will have a range of benefits which could include:

- Enhancing the appeal of home support roles through proactive promotion of a range of roles, demonstrating longer-term career prospects and sharing career success stories[24,25].
- Standardising roles and preventing role drift, by defining core competencies and role descriptions[26].
- Clarifying criteria for progression between career levels, expected levels of training and grades of pay[27].
- Boosting staff retention by improving supervision, client and HSW safety, and peer support[28,29].
- Boosting staff retention through making it easier to access training and take up professional development opportunities, that are recognised and rewarded[30].
- Establishing transparent and standardised structures for career support and career advancement[31,32].
- Broadening workforce capabilities by introducing/recognising more advanced and specialised roles in home based care and support e.g. delegated care and supported self-management[33].
- Acknowledging and rewarding staff for acquiring advanced skills and taking on more specialist roles or responsibilities[34].
- Improving access to leadership, governance and management training across the sector[35,36].

[24] Barnette, M. L., & Maurano, L. A. (1996). A home care career ladder: designing a multidisciplinary professional advancement program. Caring : National Association for Home Care magazine, 15(5), 48–52.

[25] Ní Léime, Á. (2022). "8: Expectations of Transitions to Retirement in Ireland". In Older Workers in Transition. Bristol, UK: Bristol University Press. Retrieved Sep 18, 2023, from https://doi.org/10.51952/9781529215021.ch008

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[27] Murphy L, Farragher L, Long J. The role, function, and supply of home care workers in four European countries. An evidence brief submitted to the Department of Health by the Health Research Board, Dublin, 2022.

[28] Natali, D., Spasova, S. and Vanhercke, B. (2016) Retirement regimes for workers in arduous or hazardous jobs. A study of national policies, European Social Policy Network (ESPN), Brussels: European Commission.

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[34] Connolly, C. (2014). Advanced Direct Care Worker: A Role to Improve Quality and Efficiency of Care for Older Adults and Strengthen Career Ladders for Home Care Workers. Annals of Long-Term Care. https://www.hmpgloballearningnetwork.com/site/altc/articles/advanced-direct-care-worker-role-improve-quality-and-efficiency-care-older-adults-and

[35] Harvard Business Review https://hbr.org/2019/03/the-future-of-leadership-development

[36] Sfantou DF, Laliotis A, Patelarou AE, Sifaki-Pistolla D, Matalliotakis M, Patelarou E. Importance of Leadership Style towards Quality of Care Measures in Healthcare Settings: A Systematic Review. Healthcare (Basel). 2017 Oct 14;5(4):73. doi: 10.3390/healthcare5040073.

- Utilising a career pathway for more structured workplace learning, in-service training initiatives and quality enhancement efforts and organisational effectiveness[37,38].
- Leveraging career pathways to facilitate the transition to more sustainable ageing-at-home models[39,40].

Evidence suggests that the purpose of a career pathway could include:

- Structured progression: Provides clear steps for career advancement, from entry-level to specialised roles[41].
- Skill development: Emphasises acquiring and enhancing relevant skills and competencies[42].
- Flexibility in careers: Allows customisation and different roots to access and engage based on individual interests and goals[43].
- Continuous learning: Encourages and facilitates lifelong learning to adapt to evolving job market demands and advances in community-based healthcare approaches and digital health[44].
- Supportive environment: Offers career guidance for individual career navigation and decision-making[45].
- Alignment with organisational goals: Links individual career growth and preferences for work with organisational objectives[46].

Evidence suggests that principles for a career pathway should include:

- Accessibility: Ensures pathways are accessible to all individuals, promoting inclusivity and retention[47].
- Transparency: Provides clear information on requirements and opportunities[48].
- Values: Recognises skills and competencies, performance, and potential[49].

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[47] Pun, I., & Rao, S. (2021). Career pathway models and workers' retention in healthcare organizations. Journal of Healthcare Management, 66(5), 342-357.

[48] Akkermans, J., Richardson, J., & Kraimer, M. (2021). Career Pathway Transparency: A Meta-Analytic and Integrative Review. Journal of Management.

[49] DeFillippi, R. J., & Arthur, M. B. (1994). The boundaryless career: A competency-based perspective. Journal of Organisational Behaviour, 15(4), 307-324.

- Collaboration: Involves partnerships between stakeholders for effective development.
- Empowerment: Empowers individuals to take ownership of their careers and CPD[50].
- Continuous Improvement: The pathway is periodically evaluated and updated to remain relevant to the sector requirements and population needs[51].

Stakeholder Views

Key findings from the stakeholder consultation (see section 1) mirror the international evidence by emphasising the necessity of a comprehensive career pathway for HSWs in Ireland. Stakeholder's views highlight critical components of an attractive career pathway, including:
- a clear competency framework
- formal qualifications linked to career structures
- enhanced retention and recruitment strategies and approaches
- continuous professional development (CPD) opportunity structures
- equitable compensation (fair pay rate and pay scales for levels of experience)

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[50] De Vos, A., Van der Heijden, B. I., Akkermans, J., & Meyers, M. C. (2021). Crafting one's career pathway: How employees perceive their development experiences. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 127, 103544.
[51] Stoll, L., & Bolam, R. (2021). Redesigning career pathways for teachers. Oxford Review of Education, 47(5), 639-656.

The box highlights key initiatives that can inform the development of a career pathway for HSWs.

The State of The Adult Social Care Sector and Workforce in England (2022)

Skills for Care is the strategic workforce development and planning body for adult social care in England. This report assesses the issues in England and provides information about the adult social care sector, including its size and structure, employment information, retention and recruitment issues, workforce demographics, pay, qualification rates, and future workforce forecasts. Skills for Care have developed career progression resources and proposed a career structure for the care sector in England.
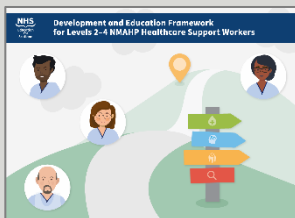
NHS Education for Scotland Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Healthcare Support Worker Development and Education Framework (2022)

The Healthcare Support Worker (HCSW) Development and Education Framework is designed for all NMAHP HCSWs in NHS Scotland and builds on the strengths of the earlier HCSW Learning Framework. Career development tools and resources have been developed for HCSWs and organisations.

Investigating the Development and Implementation of an Accredited CPD Framework within the Hair and Beauty Sector Report (Image Skillnet, 2022)

This research was commissioned and funded by IMAGE Skillnet to investigate and make recommendations for the development of a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) framework for the Hair and Beauty sector in Ireland. The research found that the need for a sector wide CPD framework to provide recognition was considerably supported. This research also identified four pillars which inform the development of a CPD framework: Technical Skills, Practical Skills, Business Knowledge and Health & Safety.

Teaching and Learning modalities for continued professional development (LHP Skillnet, 2023)

This research looked at the attitudes and experiences of healthcare professionals within the long term care sector, of different teaching and learning modalities. The aim was to provide recommendations to inform workforce development leaders, programme designers, and educators. The report distils the findings of the research and provides key recommendations to strengthen the delivery and impact of education and training for this sector.

Section 3: Proposed Knowledge Workstreams

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Knowledge Workstream 1: Competency Framework Development

Establishing a competency framework to support career development and enhance job satisfaction and staff retention in the home support workforce

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Rationale:

In the home support sector, the establishment of a robust competency framework stands as a cornerstone for fostering career progression, elevating job satisfaction, and bolstering staff retention as well as creating a dynamic workforce capable of meeting changing population needs. A competency framework serves as a structured guide that outlines the essential skills, knowledge, and behaviours required for effective performance in a particular role or profession. Countries like England[52], Scotland[53], Canada[54], and Australia[55] have developed robust competency frameworks for home support workers, guiding induction, training, enhancing professionalism, and improving the quality of care provided in the sector.

Figure 2 draws together the evidence to set out a tentative career structure for the home support sector. This structure shows progression from novice to expert, with the aim of retaining skills and staff within the home support sector, rather than suggesting the only routes for progression are into healthcare or public sector roles, for example. The figure displays indicative timeframes for progression at career levels, but these need to be explored and refined with stakeholders. Previous stakeholder feedback on the Green Paper was broadly supportive of this approach however, it is crucial to engage in further discussion and development to refine this approach.

Significance:

Developing a competency framework specific to home support workers is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it provides a clear roadmap for career development, enabling HSWs to identify areas for growth, set goals for advancement, and track their progress within the profession. By delineating the core competencies expected of various HSW roles, the framework will establish a standard of excellence that guides recruitment, training, and performance evaluation processes. Moreover, a competency framework is highly likely to enhance job satisfaction by empowering HSWs to acquire and demonstrate the skills necessary to excel in their roles. Evidence shows that when employees feel competent and capable in their work, they are more likely to experience job fulfilment, leading to increased motivation,

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[52] Skills for Care. (2018). Career Pathways in Adult Social Care: Maximising the Potential of the Workforce. Retrieved from https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/About/What-we-do/Research/Research-reports/Career-pathways-in-adult-social-care.aspx

[53] Murphy L, Farragher L, Long J. The role, function, and supply of home care workers in four European countries. An evidence brief submitted to the Department of Health by the Health Research Board, Dublin, 2022.

[54] Health Canada. (2010). National occupational competency profile of home support worker – common content. Retrieved from https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-care-system/reports-publications/home-care.html

[55] Australian Government Department of Health. (2020). National Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey—Home Care Packages Program. Retrieved from https://agedcare.health.gov.au/research-and-publications/aged-care-workforce-census-and-survey-home-care-packages-program

engagement, and overall job satisfaction. This, in turn, contributes to higher levels of staff retention, as satisfied employees are more inclined to remain in their positions and contribute positively to the organisation or profession.

Key components:

- Develop and promote a comprehensive competency framework spanning career development from pre-service to expert levels (illustrated by figure 1). This framework should cover various roles including direct support, supervisory and senior roles, care planning, service management, and leadership positions within the sector, and emphasise retention within the sector over time.

- Ensure the competency framework encompasses different types of health and social support roles, as well as accommodating new and emerging roles in home support. For example new roles in companionship, supported social interaction, home comfort and safety, mobility and functional health, e-health/telehealth support, and delegated interventions. Ensure it encompasses necessary skills and knowledge for new roles, including digital skills and supported self-management.

- Ensure each role defined by the competency framework is thorough and inclusive, covering the necessary technical skills, interpersonal skills, health/clinical knowledge, and professional behaviours expected for a role. Encourage access to professional development and training, including management, governance, and leadership development suitable to the role level.

- Incorporate competencies related to safety, emergency preparedness, and quality improvement at every level of the framework. Provide opportunities for CPD and participation in relevant training programmes appropriate to career level.

- Review existing pay scales and grades aligned with the competency framework and levels of skills and training, ensuring parity with comparable sectors.

- Evaluate the minimum qualifications required for each role type and level. Develop strategies to support the current workforce in obtaining necessary qualifications or demonstrating equivalency to ensure retention of skills and talents in the sector.

- Develop national and local strategies to facilitate access to advanced training and specialist roles for experienced staff. Encourage pilot mentorship programmes and peer support networks to support career advancement and knowledge of what works for HSWs.

- Explore mechanisms to ensure competency attainment and support career building within organisations and centrally. This may include supervised learning, mentorship programmes, or career advancement tracking systems.

Implementation:

The successful development of a robust career framework and its implementation requires collaboration among stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, home support service providers/employers, and HSWs at different career levels to agree job roles and competencies. It is essential to continuously engage with stakeholders throughout the development and implementation process to address any additional feedback or concerns that may arise. Information in section 5 of the Green Paper can inform this work. Qualification and training programmes should be designed or modified to align with the competencies outlined in the framework, ensuring that individuals at all levels receive the necessary education and support to develop and demonstrate their competencies.

Integration:

Integration of the competency framework into recruitment, performance appraisal, and career development processes is essential for maximising its benefits. By incorporating expected competencies into hiring criteria, training curricula, and professional development plans, organisations can effectively leverage the framework to enhance the quality of care, promote career advancement, and improve overall job satisfaction among HSWs. These areas of work should be included in this knowledge workstream focused on the competency framework.

Figure 2. Career Structure and Training for the Home Support Sector

Pre-service	Early Career (0+ years)	Advanced (2+ years)	Specialist (5+ years)	Expert (6+ years)

Pre-service	Early Career	Advanced	Specialist		Expert
Voluntary experience	Induction & supervised workplace learning	Annual pay increment based on performance criteria	Supervision of early career workers	**Integrated Care and Support**	Specialist expertise in support or care
Prior learning and experience in home support	Mandatory training (Core Competencies) HSW Registration	Building more advanced skills and/or a broader skill set (Advanced or client group training)	Supervision of advanced HSWs	Frailty home support / Recovery and reablement	Senior leadership or management of organisations
Essential skills and knowledge, literacy, oracy, numeracy	Participation in In-service Learning (e.g., team training for digital health and support in the home, peer learning, reflective practice, mentorship)		Organising or delivering in-service learning	Dementia home support / Multiple complex care and support needs	Leading quality monitoring or service reviews
	Maintaining a record of Career Development goals, training and knowledge and skills development		Career development of others/ appraisals	Heart failure home support / Long-term support at home	
Knowledge and values for home support Certificate				Hyper-tension home support / Medications assistance/care procedures	Leading research, policy or best practice development
	Contributing to Safety, Wellbeing and Quality Improvement in the workplace and home settings		Leading SW&QI in the workplace and home settings	Cancer home support / Diabetes home support / End-of-life care home support	

Training

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING
- Essential skills (literacy, oracy, and numeracy)
- Knowledge & Values in home support

DIGITAL SKILLS
- Digital learning
- Digital health

CORE SKILLS TRAINING HOME SUPPORT
- Recognising medical emergencies and changes in health and support needs
- Person centred home support, empathy, and diversity awareness (LGBTQI+, neurodiversity)
- Personal care training, ADL, IADL, infection control, oral health care
- Personal assistance (instrumental activities, supervised activities)
- Mental health awareness (depression, loneliness, social anxiety)
- Safety in the home environment (clients and HSWs)
- Communication with clients, cross-cultural communication, cultural competency in the home
- Communication health care professionals, other services and providers
- Disability/different ability training (hearing loss, visual impairment, learning disability)
- Health literacy (ability to obtain, read, understand, use health information

MANAGEMENT TRAINING
- Supervisor training
- Care manager training, care planning
- Home care administrator/service management education
- Leadership and management skills training

HIGHER DEVELOPMENT AWARDS HOME SUPPORT
- Care of the elderly person with frailty
- Dementia care (Alzheimer's disease, young onset)
- Heart failure
- Hyper-tension
- Cancer home support
- Post-hospital care, recovery, reablement
- End-of-Life training, palliative care (young adult to older person spectrum)
- Diabetes care
- Long-term care
- Complex health & support (cancer and dementia)

LEADERSHIP TRAINING
- Senior leadership and governance
- Quality improvement
- Data & digital leadership
- Research leadership
- Policy and Best Practice development

Knowledge Workstream 2: Connecting the Career Pathway to Multi-Pronged Workforce Solutions

Connecting the career pathway to diverse ongoing solutions to address workforce challenges, such as pay and conditions, revising qualification requirements, providing skills training at different levels, and exploring innovative workforce models

Rationale:

Connecting the career pathway to diverse ongoing solutions to address workforce challenges, such as activities carried out under the auspices of the SWIG, will be crucial for delivering more high-quality home support in the years ahead. By connecting the career pathway in with various initiatives, such as revising qualification requirements (QQI ongoing review), delivering home support hours under the National Service Plan (22 million hours provided to 54,100 people)[56], making careers more visible[57], improving pay and pensions (e.g., Workplace Relations Commission), providing skills training, and exploring innovative workforce models, the aim is to enhance the capabilities and effectiveness of the home support workforce and make working in the sector a good career choice[58]. Connecting elements of the career pathway, such as digital skills, in-service learning and quality improvement, to intersectoral workforce development strategies[59] is essential for long-term solutions that equip HSWs to meet the evolving needs of clients and families[60].

Significance:

The significance of Knowledge Workstream 2 lies in its potential to expand and elevate the standards of care within the home support sector as part of a multi-pronged strategy. By developing links between roles and career levels, and revising qualification requirements, home support workers can acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver competent care and advance in their careers. Linking roles to skills training programmes offers opportunities for CPD, enhancing the overall quality of care provided. Using the career pathway as a focus for exploring innovative workforce models could lead to improved efficiency, coordination, and better client outcomes, ultimately benefiting both home support workers and the individuals receiving care.

Key components:

- Encourage cross-sector dynamic connections (for example in education, healthcare, social welfare, training and employment) focused on advancing a career pathway, and workforce planning to incentivise workforce expansion, and enhancement in critical areas, like

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[56] https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/media/pressrel/hse-publishes-2024-national-service-plan.html

[57] For example, HSE Career Hub https://careerhub.hse.ie/

[58] Hallpike, H., Vallée-Tourangeau, G., & Van der Heijden, B. (2022). A Distributed Interactive Decision-Making Framework for Sustainable Career Development. Frontiers in psychology, 12, 790533. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.790533

[59] Tancred, T., Falkenbach, M., Raven, J., & Caffrey, M. (2024). How can intersectoral collaboration and action help improve the education, recruitment, and retention of the health and care workforce? A scoping review. The International journal of health planning and management, 10.1002/hpm.3773. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1002/hpm.3773

[60] Wehner, K., Schwinger, A., & Büscher, A. (2021). [Quality in home care: Review of relevant structural-, process- and outcome-related aspects of care]. Zeitschrift fur Evidenz, Fortbildung und Qualitat im Gesundheitswesen, 167, 15–24. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.zefq.2021.09.003

dementia and end-of-life support. Developments should be based on societal needs of an ageing population, without overlooking the support needs of children and young people, and people with disabilities.

- Seek to connect with data on client needs and understand what types of support needs are not being met, delayed, missed or partially-completed (or 'care left undone'[61,62]) in the current task-time based commissioning model and the extent of 'gift' hours that HSWs provide beyond paid work. Identify what can be done to increase client interactions and interpersonal sensitivity (relational care) within the commissioning, organisation and measurement of services, utilising digital technologies and supported self-management.

- Contribute insights on the developing career pathway to broader workforce solutions, such as informing recruitment drives (job matching, job fairs, work placement initiatives), revising qualification requirements, updating educational standards, certification and registration processes, and competency assessments (with Knowledge Workstream 1).

- Explore innovative workforce models in relation to development of the career pathway, such as team-based support and e-health/telehealth solutions, to accommodate diverse individuals' lifestyles and commitments while efficiently addressing clients' needs. Additionally, investigate supported volunteering and partnerships with community organisations to expand home-based support capacity and make connections across the career pathway.

- Connect with the international literature and learning on integrated service provision models that dynamically assess and adapt to evolving client care needs, while fostering supported self-management. Analyse role types and levels across the career pathway to optimise tasks, delegation and division of labour effectively.

- Examine how to implement more inclusive and more flexible working arrangements to attract more diverse applicants and retain talent in the sector at different levels of the career pathway.

- Identify ways to offer guaranteed work and fair pay, taking into consideration the impact of potential loss of entitlements or benefits for those working part-time (with Knowledge Workstream 4).

- Evaluate pay and financial incentive models to enhance retention and recruitment efforts to different levels of experience and job roles (with Knowledge Workstream 1).

- Seek to embed economic perspectives and evidence into the career framework, including strategies for assessing the costs and benefits of training programmes on career progression and staff retention.

- Evaluate with sector stakeholders working all levels whether establishment of a National Register for Home Support Workers, linked to specific roles or levels in the career pathway, is likely to facilitate retention and career development in the sector.

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[61] Ball, J. E., Murrells, T., Rafferty, A. M., Morrow, E., & Griffiths, P. (2014). 'Care left undone' during nursing shifts: associations with workload and perceived quality of care. BMJ quality & safety, 23(2), 116–125. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjqs-2012-001767

[62] Senek, M., Robertson, S., Ryan, T., Sworn, K., King, R., Wood, E., & Tod, A. (2020). Nursing care left undone in community settings: Results from a UK cross-sectional survey. Journal of nursing management, 28(8), 1968–1974. https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.12995

Implementation:

The successful implementation of these key connecting components requires collaboration among policymakers, educators, healthcare providers, and home support providers, as well as HSWs and other stakeholders. There are some substantial areas of future work, for example establishing clear guidelines for revised qualification requirements, developing standardised skills training programmes, and piloting innovative workforce models are essential steps in the implementation process that the career pathway should inform and integrate with. Continuous evaluation and feedback mechanisms should be developed and put in place to monitor the effectiveness of this important work and make necessary adjustments.

Integration:

Integrating a career pathway with ongoing multi-pronged workforce solutions also involves aligning these initiatives with existing policies, practices, and organisational structures. Liaison, connection and collaborative working with regulatory bodies, educational institutions, and healthcare providers is crucial for seamless integration. By embedding these solutions into the career pathway, and the home support sector, a culture of continuous improvement, professional development, and innovation can be fostered, ultimately benefiting both HSWs and the individuals and families they support.

Knowledge Workstream 3: Digital Technology Integration and Data

Integrating digital technology, establishing a robust data collection system, and conducting research on service economic perspectives to inform policy decisions and optimise the delivery of home support services

Rationale:

The integration of digital technology is driven by the need to collect more standardised and routine data about the sector, clients and HSWs, and develop innovative technology solutions to enhance the delivery of home support services. By incorporating digital tools in and around the career pathway, and conducting research on service economic perspectives, policymakers and stakeholders can make informed decisions to optimise service delivery, improve HSW skills and efficiency, and enhance the overall quality of care provided by home support workers. Embracing digital technology can reduce some HSW tasks and this should be explored, for example using automation and robotics[63], safe applications of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies for streamlining processes, facilitating communication and social interaction, and enabling personalised packages of care for clients at home. The career pathway can be used and developed to inform information communication technology (ICT) solutions (e.g., with HSE National Home Support Office), digital skills, digital literacy, digital health, or e-health, however this requires a specific focus on exploration of the capabilities of digital and assistive technology in home settings for ageing in place and other types of home support needs.

Significance:

Digital technology integration holds significant importance in modernising the home support sector and adapting to the evolving healthcare landscape as well as meeting the diverse home support needs of an ageing population. The integration of digital technology, within and around the career pathway, offers opportunities to enhance communication, coordination, remote monitoring, self-management and data management within home support services as well as providing the means to deliver large scale workforce regulation, HSW career development and training interventions across the sector. Research on service economic perspectives provides valuable insights into the cost-effectiveness of care delivery models, resource allocation, and the impact of technology adoption on service outcomes. By harnessing the combination of digital tools and economic research, stakeholders can drive evidence-based policy decisions and improve the sustainability of home support services whilst understanding the quality, cost and benefit implications.

Key components:

- Assess the current digital and data landscape in the home support sector in relation to the career pathway, including initiatives for the integration of electronic health records, e-health/telehealth platforms, mobile applications, and remote monitoring devices to enhance communication, care coordination, optimisation of service delivery and information sharing. Identify potential barriers to technology adoption among workers and clients and where the career pathway may support implementation.

- Research and consult the sector on a digital minimum data set (MDS) to inform the career pathway, workforce planning, investment and development in the sector, and determine who would be responsible for updating and sharing information, as well as the issues involved in

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[63] Buhtz, C., Paulicke, D., Hirt, J., Schwarz, K., Stoevesandt, D., Meyer, G., & Jahn, P. (2018)."Robotic systems for care at home: A scoping review" [published in German]. Zeitschrift fur Evidenz, Fortbildung und Qualitat im Gesundheitswesen, 137-138, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.zefq.2018.09.003

technology procurement (ICT led by HSE Procurement Evaluation Group), implementing, and maintaining the MDS.

- Consider developments in AI technologies and how this relates to the career pathway, including understanding the various uses and implications of advanced technologies for HSWs training and practice, service organisation, and delivery of client services, giving due attention to ethical, economic, health and wellbeing issues of HSWs and clients.

- Conducting economic evaluations, cost-benefit analyses, and outcome assessments to understand the financial implications of different digital integration solutions in care models, resource utilisation patterns, and the return on investment associated with HSW training and digital technology adoption in home support services.

- Address barriers to implementation, including digital skills development (Knowledge Workstream 1), and digital innovation in workforce models (Knowledge Workstream 2) while ensuring that the integration of digital technology enhances rather than replaces the human aspect of caring provided by HSWs.

- Develop national web-based career development systems, potentially linked or aligned with certification and/or registration systems (Knowledge Workstream 1). Use these platforms to ensure alignment of role definitions, qualifications, and career progression with training and compensation in the career pathway.

- Explore digital learning environments to promote career development through facilitating access to core skills; advanced training; leadership, governance and management training; and encouraging best practices in work organisation, client and HSW safety; and career development sector-wide (Knowledge Workstream 2).

- Explore how digital technologies can encourage collaboration and coordination among HSWs, fostering peer support and knowledge exchange across the sector (Knowledge Workstream 4).

Implementation:

Effective implementation of Knowledge Workstream 3 requires inter-sector and interdisciplinary collaboration between home support sector stakeholders, technology providers, digital health researchers, policymakers, and health and care professionals. Developing a roadmap for digital technology integration, establishing a robust data collection system, data privacy and security protocols, and conducting pilot studies to assess the feasibility and impact of technology solutions are essential steps in the implementation process. Research initiatives should be designed to generate actionable insights that inform policy decisions and drive continuous improvement in service delivery as part of advancing the career pathway for HSWs.

Integration:

Integrating digital technology, data collection, and economic research into the fabric of home support services involves aligning these initiatives with existing workflows, regulatory requirements, and quality standards, through and around the career pathway. Collaboration with home support providers, academic institutions, and government agencies is essential for seamless integration of knowledge and interventions. By embedding digital solutions and economic perspectives into decision-making processes, the home support sector can enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability, ultimately benefiting both care providers and recipients through a clearer understanding of where improvements and efficiencies can be made while improving the working lives of HSWs and outcomes for clients.

Knowledge Workstream 4: Stakeholder Engagement and Expert Guidance

Facilitating stakeholder engagement and seeking expert guidance to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of proposed solutions in developing a structured career pathway for home support workers

Rationale:

Knowledge Workstream 4 focuses on the critical aspect of stakeholder engagement and attaining expert guidance in the development of a structured career pathway for HSWs. By involving key stakeholders and seeking expert input via a separate essential knowledge workstream, the aim is to ensure that proposed solutions are effective, sustainable, and aligned with the needs and expectations of all parties involved in the home support sector. Engaging stakeholders and experts fosters collaboration, transparency, and inclusivity in decision-making processes, ultimately leading to the successful implementation of career pathway initiatives. However it takes time and skills and should not be seen as secondary to the development and implementation of a career pathway.

Significance:

Knowledge Workstream 4 aims to harness the collective wisdom, experience, and perspectives of stakeholders and experts to shape the development of a career pathway that is fit for purpose. This workstream will also strengthen the links to existing workforce development efforts. Engagement will take time and concerted effort to develop sustainable mechanisms for communication, knowledge exchange, joint decision making and collaboration. By actively involving individuals from diverse backgrounds, including HSWs at different career levels, clients, caregivers, policymakers, educators, unions, associations, home support provider organisations, and various professional groups, the development and implementation of a career pathway can be informed by a comprehensive range of insights and considerations. This inclusive approach, centred on developing a career pathway, could promote buy-in, ownership, and sustainability of proposed solutions, ensuring that they resonate with the broader home support community.

Key components:

- Facilitate stakeholder engagement in development of the career pathway and associated consultation activities (e.g., HSE-led 2024 survey of HSWs[64]) by involving a diverse range of sector, service and client stakeholders in decision-making processes to ensure the proposed career pathway addresses societal needs and priorities.

- Establish a communication strategy and communication channels for stakeholders to provide feedback and input throughout the development and implementation process. Continuously engage with stakeholders throughout the implementation process to address any additional feedback or concerns that may arise.

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[64] Progress Report of the Strategic Workforce Implementation Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Healthcare Assistants – October 2023. 275876_c0889fbf-3f9c-4235-9e79-e1240790fac7.pdf

- Seek expert input internationally on workforce development and career building (drawing on information in the Green Paper) to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of proposed solutions.

- Develop best practice guidance on the development and implementation of the career pathway for the home support sector, and information that is understandable and accessible to the different audiences that have a stake in the issues.

- Develop best practice guidance on inclusive recruitment strategies to enhance employer's recruitment practices to different HSW role types and levels. Draw on learning from local pilots and successful recruitment initiatives nationally and internationally. Emphasise the importance of career progression and continuous learning, and upskilling opportunities in recruitment materials (e.g., targeted recruitment, job fairs, public campaigns). Review job requirements to ensure that individuals are not put off by inflexible job criteria when alternatives may be feasible. Include additional guidance on recruitment to rural and low supply areas, as well as strategies for addressing critical workforce deficits, and clarity about working hours and social security benefits.

- Develop best practice guidance, and/or coordinate updates, on home support safety, emergency preparedness, service quality improvement approaches and methods.

- Developing the policy pathway to ensure government links with academic institutions and training providers to develop CPD for robust and reliable provision of education and learning opportunities.

Implementation:

Effective implementation of Knowledge Workstream 4 requires a systematic approach to stakeholder engagement, expert involvement, and development of best practice guidance throughout the career pathway development, implementation and continuous improvement process. Establishing communication channels with key stakeholders, organising focus groups, conducting consultations, and forming advisory committees are essential mechanisms for engaging diverse stakeholders and experts in understanding the importance of the career pathway, as well as its purpose, scope, and impact. Collaborating with recognised experts in the field of home support, healthcare workforce development, and policy-making can provide valuable insights and recommendations to enhance the quality and impact of best practice career pathway initiatives.

Integration:

Integrating stakeholder engagement and expert guidance into the framework of career pathway development involves creating a culture of collaboration, trust, and shared decision-making within the home support sector that values the best practice guidance and information that is provided. By aligning the interests, needs, and priorities of stakeholders and experts with the proposed solutions, a sense of ownership and commitment can be fostered, leading to the sustainable implementation and continuous improvement of career pathways for home support workers. This integrated approach ensures that the voices of those directly impacted by career pathway initiatives are heard and valued, ultimately contributing to a home support workforce that is engaged and included in decisions and the process of change.

Section 4: Next Steps

The necessary next steps are outlined below with minimum indicative timelines for each activity: Dissemination, Collaboration, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Dissemination : Month 1 and 2 - LHP Skillnet and RCSI

Widely disseminate White Paper to key stakeholders:

The proposals outlined in this White Paper should be disseminated extensively to key policy, practice, and research stakeholders across Ireland to ensure broad awareness and understanding of the recommendations that have been put forward. Create opportunities to discuss and consider the proposals.

Convene stakeholder roundtable to discuss this White Paper and career pathway development:

Organise a stakeholder roundtable meeting on Advancing a Home Support Worker Career Pathway, with invited policy, research, practice and public representatives, to facilitate action (e.g., Gov departments and agencies, HSE, QQI, HCCI, research and academic institutions, and third sector organisations) on the four proposed knowledge workstreams and establish plans for change and implementation.

Contribute to public and professional awareness activities for home support sector reform:

Develop clear and concise messages about advancing a career pathway to inform workforce campaigns and raise awareness amongst policy, research, practice and public audiences.

Resourcing : Month 1 to 3 - Owners and Supporters

Discuss resourcing needs and clarify associated costs:

As owners (HSE) and supporters (DoH, DFHERIS and SOLAS) of the SWAG implementation[65] for "Recommendation 10: Training and professional development", representatives from these organisations could be best placed to take forward funding discussions on the proposed activities. However, some of the proposed activities extend into other recommendation areas led by other owners and supporters (e.g., Department of Social Protection), particularly the overlap with Recommendations 1-4 Recruitment, and Recommendation 8 Barriers to employment, Recommendations 11 and 13 Sector reform.

Secure a budget and/or allocate suitable resources for White Paper implementation:

Agree resources and costs required to implement the proposals in this White Paper. Consideration should be given to the resourcing of collaborative leadership (knowledge workstream leads), group

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[65] Appendix VII (p.32) https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/237210/448892b3-36b4-4b7a-a41e-90368ff2345c.pdf#page=null

membership (payments and expenses), full time Project Manager for 18-months (working with Chairs and knowledge workstreams), Data Collection Manager/or data assistance for the duration, provision of access to legal and human resource assistance, administrative support for each knowledge workstream, and funding for evaluation activities (external evaluator).

Identify the organisation(s) responsible for overseeing the work:

Agree on credible responsible organisation(s) to oversee and implement appointments, support knowledge workstream delivery, liaise with the SWIG, and ensure accountability and governance for the duration of the work (minimum 18 months). Provide and/or secure sufficient resource and dedicated budget to fulfil oversight responsibilities and to arrange external evaluation of the impact of the work.

Chairs and Leads : Month 4 to 5 - Responsible organisations

Appoint Knowledge Workstream Leads and Chairs:

For each knowledge workstream the Responsible Organisation(s) should develop role descriptions, terms of appointment, and seek to appoint four joint leads: Policy Lead, Research Lead, Practice Lead, and Public Lead. Each lead (16 in total) should commit to a defined role and time commitment (by secondment or formal contract), with a suggested workload of one day per week (0.2 FTE). Criteria for these vital roles should include collaborative leadership experience, sector knowledge, community knowledge or lived experience, and the ability to drive implementation. Responsible Organisation(s) should advertise these leadership roles widely across Ireland and ensure the balance of appointments for each knowledge workstream is representative of policy, research, practice and public interests.

Additionally the Responsible Organisation(s) should nominate four Chairs from the knowledge leads to ensure oversight, governance, and coordination of the work. These Chairs should dedicate an additional half-day per week (0.1 FTE) and be responsible for convening meetings within the knowledge workstreams and knowledge exchange between all of knowledge workstream leads.

Establish communication strategies:

Agree communication procedures for knowledge workstreams and mechanisms for knowledge exchange between appointed Leads and delivery groups, ensuring clear reporting structures via the Chairs, and risk mitigation plans within each knowledge workstream and across the whole project.

Implementation : Month 5 to 17 - Knowledge Workstream Leads

Form Knowledge Workstream Groups:

Leads should aim to link into existing initiatives and programmes across policy, research and practice in collaboration with SWIG. Appoint a delivery group for each knowledge workstream based on specific criteria and requirements, including for example sector knowledge, previous decision-making participation, and service or sector networks. Delivery groups should have agreed agenda items and minutes and/or update reports should be made publicly available.

Include HSWs and client representatives:

Ensure representation of HSWs and service user/client representatives in each knowledge workstream's delivery group based on criteria like experience of working in home support, and willingness to participated in meetings and discussions. Ensure payments and expenses for all public representatives are in line with best practice guidance on involvement payments[66].

Set timelines and deliverables:

Establish clear timelines and deliverables for each knowledge workstream to track progress and ensure timely implementation of the proposals.

Monitoring : Month 5 to 17 - Knowledge Workstream Leads

Establish monitoring mechanisms:

Develop mechanisms for ongoing monitoring of knowledge workstream implementation, including key milestones for each knowledge workstream to track progress effectively and ensure alignment with relevant Workforce Strategy Implementation initiatives[67].

Central reporting framework:

Create a central reporting framework for progress and information exchange across knowledge workstreams, with public access to information to promote transparency and accountability.

Evaluation : Month 15 to 18 - External Evaluator

Conduct comprehensive evaluation of implemented initiatives:

Conduct a comprehensive evaluation (using surveys or interviews and monitoring data) of the implemented proposals.

Review impact and effectiveness and recommend adjustments or follow-on activities:

Produce a Report Card on this White Paper from 12-18 months to assess progress, document the impact and effectiveness of initiatives, and make recommendations for adjustments and next steps.

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[66] See for example best practice guidance https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/Payment-for-Public-Involvement-in-Health-and-Care-Research-A-guide-for-organisations-on-determining-the-most-appropriate-payment-approach/30838?utm_source=partner-hra&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=5-nations-payment-guide-22
[67] Progress Report of the Strategic Workforce Implementation Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Healthcare Assistants – October 2023. 275876_c0889fbf-3f9c-4235-9e79-e1240790fac7.pdf

Conclusion

In conclusion, this White Paper on Advancing Home Support Worker Career Pathways, stands as a crucial strategic tool for policymakers, researchers, home support providers, trainers and educators, offering to contribute towards efforts to expand and elevate Ireland's home support sector. Rooted in robust evidence and stakeholder consultation, the proposals for four knowledge workstreams highlight the imperative for change and the involvement of representatives of HSWs and clients/service-users directly in decision-making processes, planning, and actionable initiatives.

The multidisciplinary and collaborative efforts of stakeholders, policymakers, sectoral experts, and industry leaders are indispensable in propelling the proposed work forward. By following the outlined Next Steps, the home support sector can chart a course towards a future that places paramount importance on building successful careers, and strategic workforce development to meet Ireland's population needs. This White Paper focuses on HSWs but there is good reason to believe that a career pathway could also be valuable for nursing home healthcare assistants and other new types of support roles that will be increasingly necessary to meet the needs of an ageing population.

The proposed knowledge workstreams are grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the current home support sector landscape in Ireland and internationally and are enriched by the collective wisdom of sectoral experts, researchers, and stakeholders. By fostering a culture of collaboration, promoting transparency, and amplifying the voices of those directly engaged in home support work, we can collectively strive towards a sector characterised by professionalism, safety and wellbeing, and high-quality person centred care delivery.

As we progress in our efforts to develop a career pathway for HSWs, let's uphold our dedication to ongoing enhancement, active stakeholder involvement, and informed decision-making. Together, we have the opportunity to forge a future where every individual in Ireland requiring home support receives the utmost quality of care and the support they rightly deserve.

Annex 1. Supporting Material

- **Green Paper on Home Support Workers:**

  Green Paper on Home Support Workers (2023). Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. Commissioned by Leading Healthcare Providers Skillnet.
  https://www.lhpskillnet.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Green-Paper-on-Home-Support-Workers-Leading-Healthcare-Providers-Skillnet-December-2023.pdf

- **Bibliography of international literature & Home support worker terminology:**

  Open access available from: https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/health-services/articles/10.3389/frhs.2024.1360920/full#supplementary-material

- **Stakeholder responses to the consultation on the Green Paper:**

  Full responses to the consultation on the Green Paper from responding stakeholder organisations can be made available on request from: research@lhpskillnet.ie

- **Academic Papers:**

  Morrow, E., Kelly, C., Killeen, C., Naessens, E., Lynch, M. (2024) Exploring a career pathway for home support workers in Ireland: A systematic scoping review of the international evidence. Frontiers in Health Services. Sec. Patient Centered Health Systems. Vol.4, https://doi.org/10.3389/frhs.2024.1360920

  Morrow, E., Ross, F., Naessens, E., Kelly, C., Lynch, M. (September 2024) Exploring artificial intelligence technologies and quality of life for older people ageing in place in super-aged societies. The Possibilities of a Good Digital Society. Discussion paper. British Academy. https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/exploring-artificial-intelligence-technologies-quality-life-older-people-ageing-place-super-aged-societies/

https://www.lhpskillnet.ie/

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