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29 December 2020

Deputy Mark Ward, TD
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Ward,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following Parliamentary Question, which was submitted to this Department for response.

PQ 44450/20

To ask the Minister for Health the person or body being prioritised for home-based supports at the present time; the criteria being applied to determine priority; the way in which this is likely to change over the coming months; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

The Home Support Service is funded by Government to deliver a volume of service each year as approved in the HSE National Service Plan. It is a non-statutory service and access to the current service is based on assessment of the person's needs by the HSE and having regard to the available resources and the competing demands for the services from those people with assessed needs.

The spread of COVID-19 throughout our communities has posed significant challenges for many areas of our Older Person's Services, including Home Support Services. The HSE engaged in a detailed prioritisation review early on in the Pandemic so as to identify those most in need of services and as a result of that review a number of clients' service was temporarily suspended so as to ensure continuity of service to clients with higher priority needs. Presently, home support services have been fully restored, with the appropriate health protection guidelines being adhered to, such as physical distancing (where necessary) and rigorous Infection Prevention Control protocols in place.

As the country moves through the stages of *"The Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19"*, the HSE continues to work closely with providers and community staff to identify where service is most required. This is to ensure, insofar as possible, that Home Support services can continue where needed most. The requirements of physical distancing must be encouraged, supported and maintained so as to keep our staff and service users safe and prevent any further spread of the virus.

As this is an evolving and unprecedented situation, the HSE will keep matters under review and will advise clients and/or family members accordingly, should the need for prioritisation arise again. Furthermore, the HSE acknowledges the valuable role of carers and families, home support workers and providers across the services in supporting older people and their care groups throughout this challenging period.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sandra Tuohy".

Sandra Tuohy
Assistant National Director
Services for Older People – Operations