



Oifig an Cheannasaí Oibríochtaí & Feabhsúcháin Seirbhíse  
Seirbhísí do Dhaoine Scothaosta  
Tel: 061 483245  
Email: olderpeople.operations@hse.ie

Office of the Assistant National Director - Operations  
Services for Older People  
Tel: 061 483245  
Email: olderpeople.operations@hse.ie

**21 July 2020**

**Deputy David Cullinane, TD  
Dáil Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.**

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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 14144/20**

**To ask the Minister for Health the status of PPE provision and financial support for the homecare sector in view of the importance of the service to older persons in general but also in particular in further view of the severe implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for older persons; his plans for the same; 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 available resources and competing demands for the services from those people with assessed needs.

Home Support services for older people are provided either by directly employed staff or by voluntary and private providers who have formal tender arrangements with the HSE to deliver the services. The type of support provided includes personal care and, where appropriate, essential household duties relating to the client's 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 has engaged extensively with Approved Providers of home support and HSE community staff to identify where service is most required to ensure that, insofar as possible, 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.

During the period mid-March to end May, the HSE agreed a pay policy with Providers' representative bodies NCCN & HCCI to ensure continued payment to compensate for hours lost through temporary suspension, cocooning and prioritisation protocols. As we move through the phases of the easing of Government restrictions, the majority of home support clients have now resumed their service and on that basis, the HSE has reverted to normal pay arrangements in line with Service Arrangements.

With regard to PPE, the provision of standard PPE (i.e. gloves, aprons, sanitising hand gel) to home support staff employed by Approved Providers remains the responsibility of those Providers in accordance with Service Arrangements. Arrangements are in place in each CHO that access to enhanced PPE (including face masks) is facilitated for all healthcare workers and service providers.



Oifig an Cheannasaí Oibríochtaí & Feabhsúcháin Seirbhíse  
Seirbhísí do Dhaoine Scothaosta  
Tel: 061 483245  
Email: olderpeople.operations@hse.ie

Office of the Assistant National Director - Operations  
Services for Older People  
Tel: 061 483245  
Email: olderpeople.operations@hse.ie

Every effort is made to ensure appropriate PPE is available to ensure continued provision of home support service, especially to those clients with higher priority needs. Delivery of PPE for home support services goes centrally to multiple drop points in CHOs who then distribute PPE to staff and Providers.

The HSE is currently engaging with NCCN and HCCI in relation to increased costs for standard PPE incurred in light of the increasingly unstable market for the sourcing of PPE.

The HSE together with Approved Providers, continue to engage collaboratively to ensure the ongoing provision of home support services especially those clients with assessed high priority care.

As this is an evolving and unprecedented situation, the HSE will keep matters under review. 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 cursive script that reads "Sandra Tuohy".

---

**Sandra Tuohy**  
**Assistant National Director – Operations**  
**Services for Older People**