



Oifig an Cheannasaí Oibríochtaí & Feabhsúcháin Seirbhíse
Seirbhísí do Dhaoine Scothaosta
Tel: 061 483245
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Office of the Assistant National Director - Operations
Services for Older People
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29 June 2020

Deputy Réada Cronin
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Cronin,

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 ref 10506/20

To ask the Minister for Health the number of wards of court that had their homecare package withdrawn and were transferred to nursing homes due to the Covid-19 pandemic; the number that have died; and the number that died from Covid-19; and if he will make a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 has posed significant challenges for many areas of our Older People Services, including Home Support Services. The HSE established 9 Area Crisis Management Teams (ACMTs) across the country with responsibility of managing COVID related issues, including Home Support Services. In light of these unprecedented challenges together with the Government's guidance on social distancing and 'Cocooning' of those aged over 70, the HSE had to reassess its operation of Home Support Services nationally, to ensure that the assessed needs of those clients with the highest priority are met.

A review of prioritisation was undertaken and, as a result of that review, a number of clients with lower priority needs may have had their home support service temporarily ceased or reduced with the support of family members and/or alternative forms of volunteer-provided local supports. In each case, consideration was given to a number of factors to include, but not limited to the following: -

- Client priority requirements, frequency of service delivery
- Individual known safeguarding risks, including issues relating to wards of court
- Availability of family members to provide support who may not ordinarily be in a position to do so
- Potential to replace some elements of service with local and community voluntary services where appropriate e.g. delivery of groceries, medications etc.

In these cases, each client was contacted to advise of the assessment and decision, alternative support available and assistance given to ensure that essential requirements continue to be provided. The HSE continues to review both those clients whose home support service may have been temporarily suspended and those clients of higher priority currently in receipt of home support services, to consider if an individual client's level of need has altered and regard given to the level and types of service that could be provided which may require a restoration of service, additional home support service or the provision of other forms of



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support through community and voluntary services. CHOs are in the process of reviewing and restoring services, where capacity exists. In order to maximise the capacity available, consideration has to be given to balancing delivery of service against suspended clients, clients assessed and waiting on commencement of home support services and the continued requirement to meet the needs of higher priority clients currently in receipt of services.

Data in the detailed format requested (i.e. number of wards of court who have had their homecare package withdrawn and were transferred to nursing homes etc.) is not collated nationally. While the information may be available locally, it would take considerable resources to collate it nationally.

As the country moves through the phases of the easing of Government restrictions, 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. 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 black ink that reads "Sandra Tuohy".

Sandra Tuohy
Assistant National Director – Operations
Services for Older People