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13 July 2020

**Deputy Sean Sherlock, TD
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.**

Dear Deputy Sherlock,

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 12731/20

To ask the Minister for Health when regular home help hours curtailed during Covid-19 restrictions will be restored - Sean Sherlock.

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. In addition, the Local Authorities have taken a lead role in working with community and voluntary agencies in relation to supporting people to remain at home by providing & co-ordinating a range of supports, such as Meals on Wheels, collection and delivery of food, essential household items, fuel, medication etc.

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 support through community and voluntary services. The HSE also keeps in review those clients who are presently waiting on funding to commence their home support service and where funding becomes available, may have their service commenced, having regard to the client's assessed needs and Public Health advice.

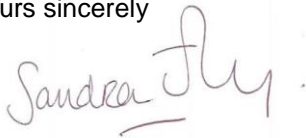
With regard to the restoration of home support services, CHOs are in the process of restoring services. In order to maximise the capacity available, consideration has to be given to balancing delivery of service against suspended clients, clients assessed and waiting on commencement of home support services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

Initially there were in the region of 11,300 clients whose service was temporarily suspended, either by client choice or as a result of the prioritisation review and as at mid-June over 6,200 clients have had their home support service restored, with 5,100 clients, whose service remains temporarily suspended, many through client choice.

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



Sandra Tuohy
Assistant National Director
Services for Older People – Operations