



17 June 2020

Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire, TD
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Ó Laoghaire,

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 9485/20

To ask the Minister for Health if all CHO areas are providing the same advice to home helps in terms of provision of PPE and sanitiser; and if all areas have the same access; and his ensure that Cork and Kerry CHO home helps have access to PPE and sanitiser

Home Support Services play an important role in providing personal care to people in their own homes and support to carers. 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 is posing significant challenges for many areas of our Older People Services, including Home Support Services. In light of these unprecedented challenges together with the Government's guidance on social distancing and their initiative on 'Cocooning' those aged over 70 and other vulnerable groups, the HSE has had to reassess its operation of Home Support Services nationally, to ensure that the assessed needs of those client's with the highest priority are met.

Guidance has been provided to healthcare staff at <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/> and <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/at-risk-groups.html>. Staff and Approved Providers are asked to keep themselves updated by regularly checking the HPSC as guidance documents may be frequently updated.

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 being made in each CHO that access to enhanced PPE (including face masks) is facilitated for all healthcare workers and service providers.

In the event that home support staff become aware of a suspect or positive case of COVID-19 in a client in receipt of home support services or a family members resident in the same premises, they are advised to contact their respective line manager for guidance and support. It is important that both clients and staff are protected from the

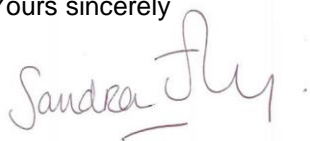
spread of COVID-19 and in that regard, enhanced PPE is now being provided to an expanded range of settings, including to support the care of people in their own homes. Every effort it made to ensure appropriate PPE is available to ensure continued provision of home support service, especially to those 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

Standard precautions including hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette and environmental hygiene remain critical to minimise the risk to staff and patients/clients of the transmission of COVID-19.

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.

The HSE acknowledges the valuable role of carers, home support workers and providers across the services in supporting older people and their care groups throughout this difficult period.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra Tuohy". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Sandra Tuohy
Assistant National Director
Services for Older People – Operations