



Oifig an Cheannasaí Oibríochtaí & Feabhsúcháin Seirbhíse
Seirbhísí do Dhaoine Scothaosta
Tel: 061 483204
Email: olderpeople.operations@hse.ie

Office of the Assistant National Director - Operations
Services for Older People
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15 May 2020

**Deputy Louise O'Reilly, TD
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.**

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

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 5053/20

To ask the Minister for Health the way in which continuity of home help services will be maintained

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 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 recent initiative on 'Cocooning' for those aged over 70, the HSE has 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 has been undertaken and, as a result of that review, a number of clients with lower priority needs may have their home support service temporarily ceased or reduced with the support of family members and/or alternative forms of volunteer-provided local supports. In these cases, each client has/will be contacted to advise of the assessment and decision, alternative support available and assistance given to ensure that essential requirements continue to be provided. Clients will be kept under review should individual circumstances change.

The HSE has 9 Area Crisis Management Teams (ACMTs) in place across the country with responsibility of managing the COVID related issues, including Home Support Service. As part of the HSE Covid-19 response, there is a requirement on each of the ACMTs to establish a number of Residential Care & Home Support Covid-19 Response Teams (CRTs) to address Covid-19 outbreaks in their area as determined by Public Health. An element of that response may involve the redeployment of home support staff to residential units/nursing homes where such deployment of staff has been deemed necessary by the area CRT.

The HSE is in constant communication both at a local level and at national level with HSE approved providers of home support, both voluntary and private providers as well as our directly employed staff in the planning and provision of home support services during the Covid-19 Pandemic.



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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.

As this is an evolving and unprecedented situation, the HSE will keep matters in review and will advise clients and/or family members accordingly. Planning for restoration of service and return to business as usual has commenced and will be led by Public Health advice as the situation continues to evolve.

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 difficult period.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sandra Tuohy".

Sandra Tuohy,
Assistant National Director - Community Operations,
Services for Older People.