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28 October 2020

**Deputy Alan Kelly,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.**

Dear Deputy Kelly,

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 20/30236

To ask the Minister for Health if home help staff are receiving regular Covid-19 tests; and if not, the reason (details supplied) ~ *these peoples work patterns brings them in contact with elderly vulnerable people daily*

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 throughout our communities has posed significant challenges for many areas of our Older Person's Services, including Home Support Services. 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.

Work is currently underway within the HSE on the development of a service model for COVID testing and contact tracing, led by Niamh O'Beirne, EMT & Lead for the testing and tracing programme. The purpose of this work is to develop a sustainable operating model going forward. Service for Older Persons considerations will be a key element of the design of the pathway to include referral, swabbing, laboratory testing, result communication and surveillance/outbreak management.

Any recommendations arising from the development of the service model for testing and contact tracing relating to the delivery of Home Support Services will be considered and implemented, where required.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra Tuohy". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Sandra Tuohy
Assistant National Director – Operations
Services for Older People