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27 January 2020

Deputy Mark Ward, TD
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Ward,

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 1161/21

To ask the Minister for Health the visiting procedures for HSE nursing homes in view of the new restrictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

The current surge in COVID-19 is a cause of profound concern to nursing home residents, their families and friends and nursing home service providers. Vigilance to prevent introduction of COVID-19 into nursing homes and strict adherence to infection prevention and control practice is more important than ever at this time.

It is important to note that the country is currently at Framework Level 5 and that therefore visiting is suspended other than on critical and compassionate grounds. Such visiting is subject to a risk assessment in each case.

Furthermore in the current climate it may not be possible to support visiting in some nursing homes because of constraints on staffing and outbreaks.

The HSE recognise the importance of clear communication on these issues with residents and families and in all circumstances the wishes of those residents who may feel safer not seeing visitors at any time should be respected. The HSE have revised their COVID-19 Guidance on visits to Long Term Residential Care Facilities (LTRCFs), V1.5 11.01.2021 can be found on the HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre website:

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/infectionpreventionandcontrolguidance/residentialcarefacilities/Guidance%20on%20visits%20to%20RCF.pdf>

Yours Sincerely,

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