



Oifig an Cheannasaí Feabhsúcháin Seirbhíse - Oibríochtaí

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Services for Older People

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16 April 2021

Deputy Róisín Shorthall, TD
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Shorthall

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 17637/21

To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to complaints from homecare recipients that some agency carers have stopped wearing face masks after getting vaccinated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Róisín Shortall

Home Support Services are an important component of the provision of service to older people with assessed needs and to support them in their choice of living in their own home and community. The HSE, working within its available resources, has sought to maintain and when possible to expand the range and volume of services available to support people to remain in their own homes, to prevent early admission to long term residential care and to support people to return to their homes following an acute hospital admission.

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 and as the country moves through the phases 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.

The safety and wellbeing of both service users and staff is a priority for the HSE and it is vital that people are protected from infection/transmission of the virus through adherence to infection prevention and control measures. The HSE maintains communication both at local and 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 ongoing Pandemic.

In addition, all Home Support staff, both directly employed and those employed by Approved Service Providers are required, and continue, to adhere to appropriate rigorous Infection Prevention Control protocols including

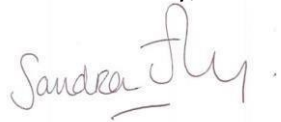
the use of Personal Protective Equipment and the use of face masks in accordance with current guidelines, available at the following web-link: -

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/infectionpreventionandcontrolguidance/ppe/Current%20recommendations%20for%20the%20use%20of%20PPE.pdf>

In relation to your query regarding the non-use of face masks by external Home Support staff, the HSE is not aware of any complaints from service users in relation to this. It should be noted that any complaints by a service user, pertaining to Approved Providers / Section 39 agencies, are in the first instance, are directed to the Provider to investigate and respond to, as is set out in the Home Support Tender 2018 Service Specifications. Any complaints received by the HSE are dealt with promptly as per the HSE Complaints Policy and any service user can submit same through a number of avenues, such as the Your Service Your Say platform.

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