



1st July, 2025

Deputy Barry Heneghan,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Heneghan,

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: 32058/25

To ask the Minister for Health if she will review the national guidance that prohibits home care workers from assisting vulnerable patients with the administration of blister-packed oral medication, including in low risk cases where patients are unable to self-administer due to severe physical conditions; if she will consider allowing greater flexibility in such cases under clinical oversight; and if she will make a statement on the matter. -Barry Heneghan

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, having regard to the available resources and the competing demands for the service.

Demand for home support continues to increase due to population growth and the increasing dependency of the growing numbers of people aged ≥80years, within the over 65 years' cohort. The home support service is managed by the local Home Support Management Team within each Health Region to ensure that this key service is available at the required times, in a flexible way and at the appropriate standard to support service users assessed needs.

Home Support Services are provided by both directly employed Healthcare Assistants (Home Support) and home support workers employed by Approved Providers who have formal service arrangements with the HSE. The National Guidelines and Procedures for Home Support provide guidance and information on the operation of the service. Please follow the link hereunder to view the document:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/olderpeople/national-guidelines-and-procedures-for-the-standardised-implementation-of-the-home-support-service-hss-guidelines.pdf>

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 type of Home Support that is provided includes personal care and, where appropriate, essential household duties relating to the service user's assessed needs. The Home Support service which people receive is based on an individual service user's care needs and the support provided, and associated home support care plan will vary dependent on the level of dependency and each service user's individual ability to undertake activities of daily living.

With regard to your query in respect of assistance with medication, please note that the Home Support service is a non-nursing service and therefore home support workers can only provide a prompting service to those who require same. Home Support workers provide assistance with prompting the service user to take medicines and must record all prompts in the Schedule of Services / Home Support Care Plan record. In medicines management, prompting is encouraging or reminding the individual to administer their medicines. These tasks include:

- Bringing medicines to a person to allow that person to take the medication
- Opening blister pack at the request of the person who is to take the medication
- Ensuring the individual has a drink to take with their medication.

Assistance with prompting to take medicines is only performed with the informed consent and authorisation of the service user and or / their representative as per the service user's Personal Support Plan, the HSE and/or the Approved Service Provider.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Jordan
Head of Service
Services for Older People, Access and Integration