

Focus Groups to inform the development of National Standards for Home Support Services, 2021

Background

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is the statutory body established under the Health Act 2007 to drive high quality and safe care for people using our health and social care services. One of HIQA's many functions is to set standards for health and social care services.

It is widely recognised that the majority of people wish to be cared for in their own homes for as long as possible. The future demographic challenges, trends towards increasingly complex care being provided in the home, and the need to focus on a human rights-based approach that facilitates autonomy and choice, underline the need for quality home support services.

HIQA recognises the importance of the quality and safety of home support services to allow people to remain in their own homes for longer. As such, HIQA is developing draft National Standards for organisations who provide home support services in Ireland.

Context

The Programme for Government (2020) commits to the introduction of a statutory scheme to support people to live in their own homes, providing access to high-quality, regulated home care. This scheme is currently under development within the Department of Health. It is intended that the scheme will provide equitable access to high-quality services, based on a person's assessed care-needs.

HIQA is developing these draft national standards for home support services to complement the primary legislation and minimum requirements (regulations) being developed by the government (see appendix 1).

It is envisaged that the standards for Home Support services will cover a wider range of services than those proposed to be covered by the government regulations.

National standards are a set of high-level outcomes that describe how services can achieve safe, quality, person-centred care and support. They are evidence-based and informed by engaging with those who use and provide our health and social care services. The National Standards aim to promote progressive quality improvements in home support services and will give a shared voice to the expectations of the public, people using services, service providers and staff.

How you can contribute to the Draft National Standards

As part of the development of the standards, we are engaging with a range of stakeholders to ensure the standards are fit for purpose and will contribute to the improvement of home support services in Ireland.

The next stage of engagement is a series of focus groups with people using home support services, their family and informal carers, home support workers, advocacy groups and providers of home support services. The sessions will provide an opportunity for people to share their views on the key issues that the standards should address. Learning from these focus groups will ensure the standards are relevant within the Irish context.

Each focus group will run for approximately one hour online, using zoom, and will be facilitated by a member of HIQA's Standards Team. The information from these focus groups will be treated confidentially. Points will be summarised and will not be attributed to any one individual.

In preparation for the focus group, we are asking participants to consider the following questions:

- 1.** What is working well in home support services?
- 2.** What would make things better for people using home support services?
- 3.** What are the important outcomes for people using home support services and what is needed to achieve these outcomes?

The purpose of these questions is to help you to consider some key areas in advance and is not in any way intended to limit the discussion. There will be opportunities for participants to raise additional points throughout the session.

For more information about the project and about your participation, please contact Judy Gannon on standards@hiqa.ie or on 087-632 5638. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this important session. We look forward to meeting you and hearing your views.

Appendix 1

Proposed government regulations for home support services

(Draft regulations for Home Support providers, Home Support Reform Unit, Department of Health, 18 November 2021).

It is currently envisaged that the initial regulations will refer to 'Home-support' as the provision of personal care and support to a person of age 18 or older in their home who by reason of illness, infirmity or disability is unable to provide it for themselves without assistance.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- a) physical assistance with mobility, personal hygiene (including dressing, skin, hair and nail care), nutrition, hydration and toileting.
- b) prompting and supervision in relation to the taking of medication and the activities listed in (a) where a person is unable to perform them competently without such prompting and supervision.
- c) support with Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs) where that support is tantamount to essential care that maintains a person in their home.

It is currently not proposed to include the broader range of services that are provided in a person's home to support people with care-needs to live independently, for example, services provided by nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists or other healthcare professionals in these regulations.

Note: It is envisaged that the Standards for Home Support services will cover a wider range of services than those proposed to be covered by the regulations above.