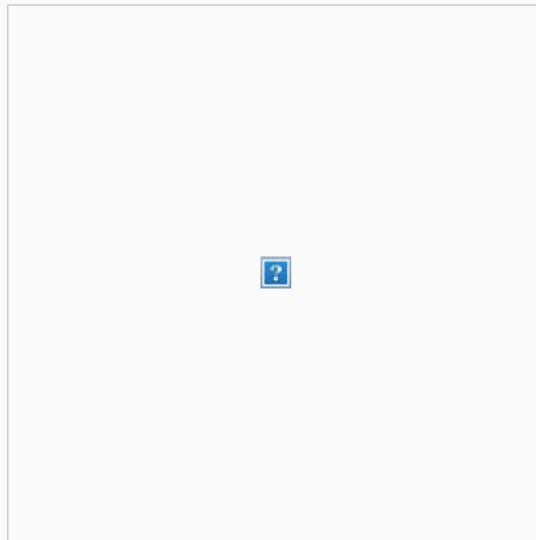


**From:** Tadhg Daly  
**To:** [Fiona Kenny](#)  
**Subject:** Covid-19: HSE communication, dedicated helpline & Essential Workers Letter  
**Date:** Sunday 29 March 2020 13:43:23

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Dear Member,

Today we provide updates regarding:

- **HSE communication with NHI re Covid-19 support measures**
- **HSE helpline to provide occupational advice for healthcare workers**
- **Reminder: Essential workers letter template**
- **Minister for Health meeting tomorrow**

**HSE communication with NHI re Covid-19 support measures**

Within our [Covid-19 Friday Members Update](#) we informed of representations to HSE CEO Paul Reid. We received a response from HSE this weekend with regard to matters raised.

The HSE acknowledges the preparedness of nursing homes within a short timeframe for the challenges presented and the risk that the spread of the virus poses to nursing home residents and staff.

The Executive informs it has taken measures to support the sector through:

- Developing/Revising all guidelines and clinical advice related to COVID as issued by NHI over the past two weeks.
- Commencement of the supply on a prioritised basis of PPE (COVID related) to the private and voluntary nursing homes where there are likely or known outbreaks.

- Provision of clinical guidance through Webinar regarding the management of residents who contract Covid-19 in residential care settings, including end of life care.

The HSE informs the management at local level of the Covid-19 measures rests with Area Crisis Management Teams (ACMTs) chaired by the 9 Chief Officers of the CHOs (Community Healthcare Organisations) and including all relevant HSE services including public health, acute hospitals, National Ambulance Service.

It states: "All ACMTs have been asked to prioritise residential care as a focus for testing and management of outbreaks given what we have learned to date about the nature of the spread of the illness related to the virus. ACMTs are asked now to form on an 'as needs' basis multi-disciplinary crises teams to include input from public health specialists professionals such as consultant geriatrician and palliative care, senior nursing and management to liaise and work with individual centres who are experiencing an outbreak. These teams will be linked closely to their respective ACMTs to advise on unfolding situations and steps to be taken to support the nursing home to regain a 'steady state'. It will, of course, be imperative that nursing homes will be taking all the steps necessary to prepare for and contain such outbreaks including ensuring that there is sharing of staff across the sector, supporting contingency arrangements for medical cover etc. Each circumstance may need different solutions and the expertise of the HSE multidisciplinary team linking closely with the registered provider and person in charge to support their plan will help support this through."

With regard to access to PPE, it states the significant delivery anticipated over the weekend will be of assistance in supporting the prioritisation process and ensuring that it can be made available in a timely manner particularly to nursing homes who have outbreaks. It informs engagement will be undertaken with HSE procurement early next week "to ensure that the process through the ACMTs is working well from a logistics perspective, albeit with constraints remaining until we have a steady supply of PPE as we move forward".

Our representations for the HSE to desist from recruiting from our sector will be referred to its head of HR, we are informed.

You will be aware our engagement with the HSE is continuous and we will follow-up further with regard to the effective operation of Area Crisis Management Teams in their support of nursing homes at local level.

**HSE helpline for occupational advice for healthcare workers**

The HSE has established a helpline specifically to support healthcare workers in relation to occupational health advice during Covid-19. Arising from NHI representations, the helpline is open to nursing staff within our nursing homes and also providers of care. The contact number is **1850 420420** and the helpline is available 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 5pm Saturday and Sunday.

**Reminder: Essential workers letter template**

Our Update on Wednesday provided you with a template for utilisation by your staff in presenting to emergency services that they are essential workers fulfilling frontline duties. We are providing the letter to you again for utilisation:

[Download the letter in PDF format here](#)

[Download the letter in Word format here.](#)

**Minister for Health meeting tomorrow**

A reminder that representatives from our sector are meeting with Minister for Health Simon Harris tomorrow. Critical challenges presenting that will be brought before the Minister will principally be:

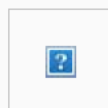
- Access to PPE and specialist equipment
- Staffing constraints upon our sector and requirement for the State to desist from depleting private and voluntary nursing homes of staff
- Requirement to recognise Covid-19 is having huge cost implications for every nursing homes and this must be recognised in enhanced funding for the Fair Deal scheme or emergency funding

We will of course update Members post-meeting and wish you a safe Sunday.

Yours,



Communications & Research Executive



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**Our mailing address is:**

[info@nhi.ie](mailto:info@nhi.ie)

**Our contact number is:**

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