

**From:** Out of scope  
**To:** Out of scope [parliament.govt.nz](mailto:parliament.govt.nz)  
**Cc:** [Brian Coffey](#); [ODI \(MSD\)](#); [I request \(MSD\)](#)  
**Subject:** ODI ADVICE - Communication to Home and Community Support clients  
**Date:** Thursday, 10 February 2022 10:39:00 am  
**Attachments:** [Letter for referrers \(2\).docx](#)  
[Client letter.docx](#)  
[FAQ document.docx](#)

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Hi Out of scope,

Thank you for sending through the information about possible withdrawal of homecare services in response to the Covid-19 Omicron pandemic. Whilst, the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) appreciates the difficulties that all of society has and will continue to face as a result of the pandemic, it is disappointing that some of the most vulnerable people in the community must face the uncertainty of having their support reduced at what is already a stressful time for many.

- There needs to be a greater sense of empathy in the letters. For example: *"Reluctantly but as necessary we need to inform you of planning for how Home and Community Support services will be prioritised for people receiving those services if the home, community and disability support workforce is impacted by Covid-19 Omicron. We understand that this will create uncertainty and unease for those who receive these services. This is similar to the planning undertaken in November last year when there was concerns that the work force would be impacted by those in the work force who were choosing not to be vaccinated ...."*
- It should be noted that Home and Community Support Services fall into two relatively clear aspects of support. The Ministry of Health (MoH) website describes this as:

## **Household management and personal care** (copied from the MoH website)

Household management may include help with:

- preparing meals
- washing, drying or folding clothes
- house-cleaning, vacuuming and tidying up.

Personal care may include help with:

- eating and drinking
- getting dressed and undressed
- getting up in the morning and getting ready for bed
- showering and going to the toilet
- getting around your home

The attached communications need to make it clearer that it is the "Household management" activities that may not be as available and that the "Personal Care" aspects of Community Support Services that will remain as a priority. The messaging throughout the three attached documents needs to

be much clearer on the commitment to not compromise the "personal care" aspect of Home and Community Services.

- We have noted that the Ministry of Health has already planned for and published this service prioritisation approach on their website on 17 November 2021 (copied below) when it was anticipated that there may be service disruption because disability and community support staff may choose to not be vaccinated and therefore unable to undertake their work. Perhaps that should be referenced in the communications in the sense of "we planned for this last year and are now needing to do so again".
- Another matter to be considered ... the communications are heavily focussed on Home and Community Support Services. The client letter refers to "home care organisations"; for clarity ODI wonders whether disabled people, their family/whānau will equate Home Care and Support Services with the Disability provider they receive services from. Therefore, for clarity, the term Disability Provider should also be used.
- ODI expects that there will be some backlash from disabled people and their supporters surrounding this issue. Disabled people are likely to again feel marginalised and pushed aside. It is likely that questions will be raised about the possibility of paying family and friends who 'step in' to help. Questions are also likely around the preparedness of providers and whether they have been encouraged to recruit additional staff, i.e. "surge capacity" to cater for the potential gap in services.
- When involving family members in the provision of personal care for disabled people there is also a matter of dignity. Some disabled people may not wish for their whānau to be involved in their care, even if they are available to do so. There seems to be no consideration given to this in the plan.
- The communications assume that all those people affected have ready access to family/whānau networks and friendship networks. ODI would like to note that not all people requiring 'care' have someone else that can take on that care for them, and that this may need to be taken into account when decisions about reductions in services are being made. Has consideration been given to linking into the "care in the community" initiatives being stood up by MSD and the MoH?
- ODI notes that the messaging around potential reduction of services was to go out to clients from 9 February 2022. ODI hopes that measures were taken to ensure that the information went to clients in their chosen alternate format, should they require one. Furthermore, these clients should receive this information at the same time as the clients who do not require information in an alternate format.
- ODI would like to see more assurances in the letter going to clients

that services will be fully reinstated once the current crisis has passed. People will worry that if their services are reduced or removed, they may not be reinstated. Therefore, a message of reassurance needs to be given very clearly.

- ODI hopes that the individual circumstances of the clients will be taken into consideration when it comes to reducing 'non-essential' services. It is possible that a service that is non-essential for one client, may be essential for another client with a different set of needs. We note that there is information on this in the FQA. "**Is homecare service an essential or critical service?**". Perhaps this messaging needs to be given more prominence.
- ODI also notes the confusion that may be engendered by the FAQ which says "**Will this impact home medical services provided?**

*No, this is strictly about homecare services—it's not about medical care or support.*" ODI is concerned that the term "medical care or support" does not adequately describe "personal care" which is provided under Ministry of Health Home and Community Support Services.

It should be clear that "personal care" will not be compromised. The focus of prioritising is on the "Household Management" aspect of Home and Community Support Services

- Finally, ODI notes that the term "people with disabilities" has been used throughout the documentation. The terminology agreed and accepted by the disabled community is "disabled person" or "disabled people". Therefore, ODI would encourage that documentation associated with this task be altered to reflect this.

Ngā mihi manahau

#### Office for Disability Issues

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## Home and Community Support

# Workforce Advisory - 17 November 2021

The mandatory vaccination order has been legislated to keep our population safe and allow our health and disability support system to continue to function. We know that many people who have health issues, including people with a disability and older people, are more likely to become very unwell due to COVID-19. This is why getting as many people vaccinated as possible is so important.

A number of health and disability support workers have chosen not to be vaccinated. This means providers may need to reduce services and focus support to those most in need.

Until the workforce is able to return to existing levels, providers will need to prioritise those supports which are essential to keeping our population safe at home. This may mean reducing or stopping household management services and may mean reducing the number of visits to some clients.

If you receive home and community support services and are concerned about what this might mean, please communicate with your provider about your needs and their ability to meet those needs over the next few months while the workforce issues are addressed.

View more on [COVID-19 mandatory vaccinations](#) and the [exemptions process](#).

There is also a dedicated email for queries about the Order: [healthorders@health.govt.nz](mailto:healthorders@health.govt.nz)

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