



21/02/22

Information on potential impact to home support services if COVID-19 Omicron is widespread

The COVID-19 Omicron variant is likely to spread through communities.

Home and Community Support Services (HCSS) workers and their whānau may get ill with the virus or be required to self-isolate due to being a close contact. Therefore, some workers will be temporarily unavailable while they recover from COVID-19 or complete self-isolation. This is likely to create some workforce shortages.

In anticipation, a number of measures have been taken to protect you and your Support Worker from getting COVID-19, such as making staff vaccination mandatory and providing Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).

Planning is underway for client support if the number of staff is reduced.

It is important to let you know in advance that providers will need to prioritise services for clients who require support to remain safe in their home. This may mean that some of the support you are currently receiving will be reduced or suspended for a short period of time.

Providers will update you with additional information as needed and they will let you know when services might return to normal.

You may want to contact family members and/or friends to plan for your support, should a support worker not be available to provide your usual care.

Below are some frequently asked questions that may be useful:

What services could be affected?

Home and Community Support Services may need to:

- reduce or cease housework services,
- reduce the number of support visits,
- change the support worker and/or time and frequency that you currently receive a service.

How will I know if I'm affected?

Your homecare organisation representative will contact you and advise of any changes that may be needed to your regular homecare service delivery.

Who do I contact for more information and how can I discuss urgent care needs with my homecare organisation?

Please call your homecare organisation directly — ***please keep in mind their busiest time is from 7:00am to 10:30am. If you need to call them, please call between 10.30am and 5.00pm.***

What can I do?

Funders and service providers will try to minimise COVID-19's impact on home care service delivery. However, during this period, you may want to organise family/whānau or friends to temporarily help with your housework or personal care. If you choose this option, you may 'opt out' of a homecare service for this period. Please notify your homecare organisation by phone — ***as above, please call between 10.30am and 5.00pm. It is also critical to let your homecare organisation know if you or a family/ whānau member or someone living with you in your home become unwell, are waiting for a COVID-19 test or have been told to self-isolate. This enables your homecare organisation to provide support appropriately.***

We understand these steps present challenges for you, your carers and your whānau. Please be assured providers will do their best to meet your needs during this time.