

## Potential Impact of COVID-19 Omicron on home support services

### **Temporary scale-back of homecare services**

If Omicron COVID-19 cases increase, there is the potential for staff shortages in homecare, and homecare organisations will need to scale back services temporarily.

### **Planning ahead – for homecare clients and their family/whānau**

People receiving homecare services are being asked to plan ahead with family/whānau and friends to step in and provide help with housework, meal preparation, cooking and help with personal cares - if there are temporary staff shortages.

### **Planning ahead – for hospital staff and others who make referrals to homecare services**

To manage if there are staff shortages, it has been agreed by homecare organisations and funders, including Disability Support Services (DSS), ACC and District Health Boards that:

- All homecare organisations will continue to accept referrals; however, depending on staff capacity, they may be able to provide essential cares only. Please consider this when requesting support on discharge from hospital.
- New requests for non-essential services such as housework will be deferred or declined.

## FAQs

### **What services could be affected?**

Homecare organisations 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.

### **Who will let people know if services need to be temporarily scaled back?**

Home care service providers will let their clients know if services need to be temporarily scaled back due to staff shortages.

## **Will this impact home medical services provided?**

No, this is strictly about homecare services—it's not about medical care or support.

## **Is homecare service an essential or critical service?**

The Ministry of Health's website outlines the definition for critical health services here: [Guidance for critical health services during an Omicron outbreak | Ministry of Health NZ](#).

Homecare services for older people or people with disabilities would be considered critical if they are needed to prevent an immediate risk of death or serious injury to a person or prevent serious harm. For example, most people could cope adequately without their home being vacuumed for a few weeks. However, if a person's health or disability means that they cannot keep their house clean enough to stay healthy, the support they receive to do so would be considered critical.

## **What else are the Ministry and other funders for home care programmes doing to minimise the impact on the workforce?**

The Ministry of Health is making vaccine boosters available and providing information, advice and guidance on how people can stay safe and they are working collaboratively with homecare organisations to work through how best they can support the workforce and clients.