

Guidance for Communication with Families

Some of the measures introduced to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, especially in residential services for people with disabilities, has resulted in less personal contact with families, especially as a result of visitor restrictions. This is difficult for people supported and their families. It's important that the continued efforts by staff, through the use of technology and other innovative approaches, focus on maintaining regular contact between people supported and their families in ways that work best for them, to mitigate the impact of these restrictions.

For families, the concerns for their family member, who they cannot visit, are increased by the published numbers each day which highlight the concerns for long-stay residential services. Families have indicated that "They don't know what is happening". They are anxious that there will be a major breakout of the virus in the service their family member uses. They are concerned that there may be outbreaks they are not being told about. They are concerned that, if there is an outbreak, they are not being told about how it is being managed.

Management and staff of disability residential services should make every effort, while maintaining confidentiality and adherence to the requirements of GDPR, to:

- inform families of the measures in place to reduce the risk of an outbreak of COVID-19 in the residential service;
- inform families of the contingency plans in place to ensure the safe and quality support to their family member if there is an outbreak in the residential service;
- if there is a confirmed case, the residential service should inform families at the earliest opportunity that there has been an outbreak in the service and inform them of the measures being taken in response to the outbreak. Families should be kept up to date on how the situation evolves in the service in the time following a confirmed diagnosis.

This will ensure that families are informed about what is happening and will be helpful in reducing unnecessary anxiety