



Mental Health Commission

Update on COVID-19 monitoring

On 1 April 2020 the Department on Health wrote to the Mental Health Commission requesting a risk assessment of mental health services based on disease progression, environment and staffing levels. The Commission commenced weekly monitoring with all approved centres and 24-hour nurse staffed community residences from 7 April 2020. This monitoring included an assessment and reassessment against a COVID-19 risk framework, including the following risk criteria:

1. The resident cohort does not include at-risk populations
2. Residents are not accommodated in shared accommodation
3. The physical environment is able to facilitate separation and cohorting of residents
4. The service maintains a schedule of cleaning
5. There are clear protocols for communications relating to Covid-19
6. Protocols have been established for visitors
7. The service is able to provide general health, emergency and palliative care services
8. Protocols have been established for the admission and transfer of residents
9. The service has access to staff with appropriate expertise
10. Staff have access to relevant training
11. Staff are not working across services
12. There is a plan for staffing contingencies
13. The service has a baseline stock of PPE

Through the weekly monitoring of disease progression, we have noted significant decreases in suspected and confirmed cases for both staff and residents, particularly over the last couple of weeks. As such, we will be moving our COVID-19 monitoring of mental health services from weekly monitoring of all services to a risk-based approach based on known outbreaks.

Weekly COVID-19 monitoring

From Monday 15 June, we will be continuing weekly monitoring of services with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19. These will continue through the defined points of contact within services.

Fortnightly thematic monitoring

For all other services we will be moving to fortnightly contact with services. With these services we will be continuing our thematic monitoring of service continuity and COVID-19 preparedness in the context of the phased lifting of restrictions. This will involve a different short set of questions each fortnight, reflective of public health guidance and aligned to the national standards for mental health services (Quality Framework).

To date, our thematic monitoring questions have included:

- What are your current processes/protocols for new admissions?
- Are general health reviews being done (e.g. 6-monthly reviews) and how are emerging medical needs being identified, assessed and managed?
- What is the current level of multi-disciplinary team (MDT) involvement in care and treatment in the service?

- What current restrictions, if any, are in place affecting resident's freedom of movement and access to the outdoors (in line with current public health guidance)?

These thematic questions look at current processes within services in key areas of the risk framework. It is important to reiterate that this is not an inspection, compliance or enforcement process.

Notifications of outbreaks

Please be reminded that any new outbreaks of COVID-19 must be notified to the Commission, to: Compliance@mhcirl.ie.

As per Interim Public Health and Infection Prevention Control Guidelines on the Prevention and Management of COVID-19 Cases and Outbreaks in Residential Care Facilities and Similar Units an outbreak is defined as a single suspected case of COVID-19 in a resident or staff member in the facility, OR one confirmed case of COVID-19 in a resident or staff member in the facility.

Validation of cases and disease progression

In the coming weeks we will also be contacting services who reported confirmed cases of COVID-19 to validate disease progression within mental health services. Services will be provided with a standard report template which will allow for validation and sign-off of the data within services, as appropriate. Indicators remain in development, but may include:

- Total confirmed cases across reporting period – residents
- Total confirmed cases across reporting period – staff
- Data in respect of confirmed cases, e.g. demographics, underlying conditions, testing

For approved centre, the report template will be issued to the registered proprietor for the facility. For community residences, the report template will be issued to the relevant Head of Service.