

COVID-19 Approved Centre Regulatory Notice

Mental Health Commission & Inspector of Mental Health Services



Monday, 8 June 2020

In our memorandum of 25 March 2020, we outlined a list of changes to the Mental Health Commission's regulatory processes in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes were implemented to facilitate the urgent need to prioritise resources around safe and appropriate patient care.

Our priority remains the safety and wellbeing of people using mental health services. It is in this context and in response to the Government's recent announcements regarding the phased lifting of restrictions, that we have reviewed the changes to our regulatory processes set out in the previous memorandum. This memorandum provides an update on these changes.

COVID-19 Risk Assessment and Monitoring

As you will be aware, on 1 April 2020 the Department on Health wrote to the 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 the risk framework, weekly monitoring of disease progression, and key questions relating to testing and access to PPE.

As there have been notable decreases in suspected and confirmed cases for both staff and residents over the last number of weeks we will be moving our COVID-19 monitoring of mental health services from blanket weekly monitoring of all services to a risk based approach based on known outbreaks. We will be continuing thematic monitoring of service continuity and COVID-19 preparedness in the context of the phased lifting of restrictions.

We will be issuing an update on our COVID-19 monitoring in the coming days.

Inspection Processes

In our memorandum of 25 March, we advised of the suspension of inspections of approved centres. The Mental Health Act 2001 requires that an inspection of every approved centre is conducted at least once a year. As such, the Commission intends to recommence inspections of approved centres later this summer, in line with public health guidance.

The inspection process will be altered to protect the health and welfare of approved centre residents and staff, as well as our inspector teams and other Commission staff. As part of this new process, all inspections for the remainder of 2020 will be announced inspections. It is likely that these inspections will be structured differently from previous inspections, for example with smaller teams over shorter periods, depending on risk. Further information in relation to the schedule of these inspections and the inspection process will be communicated to you in due course.

Compliance Processes

In our memorandum of 25 March, we advised of the suspension of the requirement to submit Corrective and Preventative Action (CAPA) plans for inspections completed in 2020. We also suspended the requirement to submit updates on CAPA plans for inspections completed in 2019. We are now reinstating these requirements. We will be in contact with services directly in the coming weeks to request a CAPA plan or an update on CAPA plans, as appropriate. We are cognisant that service provision has undergone significant changes over the last few months. We are committed to working with services to reflect these changes as part of the plans and updates submitted.

These plans or updates will be required to be submitted through our Comprehensive Information System (CIS), so please ensure that the relevant people in your services have the required access to the system. Any queries can be directed to cis@mhcirl.ie.

Condition Monitoring

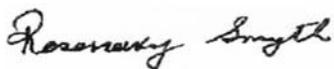
Over the coming weeks, the Commission will be writing to services on an individual basis in relation to recommencing the submission of reports as required by certain conditions.

Further to our memorandum of 25 March, there has been no change to the other regulatory processes; quality and safety notifications, registration and enforcement practices.

As always, we encourage you to stay in touch with us. Please contact us if there are specific concerns and issues that you would like to make us aware of. We will continue to provide updates to Registered Proprietors and the public, as required.

We wish you and all approved centre residents, patients and staff well during these challenging times.

Yours sincerely,



Ms Rosemary Smyth
Director of Standards and Quality Assurance



Dr Susan Finnerty
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If you have a general query relating to the inspections please email inspectorate@mhcirl.ie, for all other general queries please email compliance@mhcirl.ie.