

**Chief Inspector of Social Services**  
**Health Information and Quality Authority**

*Communique 4*

**COVID-19 Contingency Planning in Designated Centres**

23 March 2020

Dear provider,

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) continues to pay close attention to the rapidly-developing situation in respect of COVID-19 (coronavirus).

I recognise that providers of designated centres are working hard in an unprecedented situation. In these challenging times, it is essential that residents continue to receive safe, and high-quality care.

Further to my correspondence of 12 March 2020, I am contacting you today with regard to the contingency plans in place in your designated centre to manage the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak.

Please consider if your contingency plans include the elements below, while also ensuring to review HSE ([www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)) and Government ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)) guidelines and updates on a daily basis.

**GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS:**

**At group level**

- Have you systems in place to maintain daily contact with each designated centre under your governance and management structure?
- Have you access to appropriate clinical expertise for each centre as the need arises during this public health emergency?
- Has each unit of each designated centre adequate supplies of anti-bacterial products, hygiene equipment, and personal protective equipment; and will they continue to have access to such products/equipment for as long as necessary?
- Where relevant, are there contingency plans in place if centralised services such as catering and or laundry facilities have to cease operation?
- Are the medication stock levels in each centre adequate to meet the needs of the residents and will they continue to remain adequate for as long as necessary?
- Have you updated plans in place to manage visitors coming to the centre to ensure measures are proportionate and in line with public health advice?
- How have you assessed the impact of current precautions and public health messaging on residents, including the potential impact on their mental health?

**At individual centre level**

- Have you access to appropriate clinical expertise during this public health emergency?
- Have you adequate supplies of anti-bacterial products, hygiene equipment, and personal protective equipment; and will you continue to have access to such products/equipment for as long as necessary?

- Are your medication stock levels adequate to meet the needs of the residents and will they continue to remain adequate for as long as necessary?
- Have you updated plans in place to manage visitors coming to the centre to ensure measures are proportionate and in line with public health advice?
- How have you assessed the impact of current precautions and public health messaging on residents, including the potential impact on their mental health?

**STAFFING CONSIDERATIONS:**

- Are all staff working directly with residents trained on the COVID-19 virus, including how to minimise the risk of getting the disease, and in the prevention of infection?
- Do you have plans in place for staff to report and manage a confirmed/suspected case of COVID-19 within the designated centre?
- Do you have plans in place to ensure continuity of care to residents in the event of a significant shortfall of staff attending work due to required self-isolation or an outbreak of the COVID-19 virus?
- Have you reviewed the effectiveness of your on-call systems to ensure your staff have 24/7 access to managerial and clinical support and advice at all times?

**INFECTION CONTROL CONSIDERATIONS:**

- Have you updated relevant policies and procedures in relation to responding to an outbreak of COVID-19?
- Has your risk strategy been updated to minimise the risk of infection of COVID-19 to residents and staff working in designated centres?
- Have you identified suitable facilities and accommodation in your services where you can provide care and support to a resident(s) who may require isolation?

Please be advised that this is not a definitive list, but rather aspects of service delivery to consider when reviewing your overall approach to contingency planning. Depending on the nature of your service, additional or alternative considerations may be relevant.

There is no requirement to send your contingency plan to us - we will maintain contact with you during this time.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Dunnion

Chief Inspector of Social Services