



This report is by the National Advocacy Service and the Patient Advocacy Service.



The report is about how Covid-19 impacted people in disability day and residential services. It also says how we supported people in the difficult Covid-19 times.



During the Covid-19 time the National Advocacy Service and the Patient Advocacy Service changed how we worked to phone and video meeting contact.

We kept providing a quality advocacy service to people who needed it.



Before Covid-19, people with disabilities faced many problems with their rights in areas such as education, justice and decision-making.

These problems with rights were made worse by Covid-19 for people who live in residential services and go to day services.

During Covid-19, day services were closed. People in residential services could not go to their day service and could not have visitors.



Other disability and community services were also closed. Sometimes there was poor communication about these changes for people with disabilities.

The closing of services had an impact on the mental health of people with disabilities and their families.



People told us they felt anxious, depressed and withdrawn from their support services.

Family members said they were very tired, alone and not supported by services. Most respite services closed or were very limited.



Some people also said they had different, good supports during Covid-19. People said they would like to stay with community based supports after Covid-19.

Many people were not included in making decisions about themselves. A service sometimes spoke to next of kin instead. This is not right.



We supported many people to have their voice heard in decision-making.

The rules about transport meant people in residential services could not access their community in many cases.



Many people had to rely on family to take them to their day service.

In big residential services it was hard to manage Covid-19 with lots of people living together.



Some people were able to move into community homes and other people had their planned moves to community homes delayed.

We had safeguarding referrals made about people not being able to access their own money.



Safeguarding was very difficult as we could only talk to people over the phone, social workers could not visit people in their home and many social workers were doing Covid-19 work. This made it harder to support people who communicate differently.

Recommendations



To ensure a human rights approach is taken, people with disabilities must be heard when decisions are made about them in a crisis.

They should also have input into any policy or laws that will impact on their lives.



We supported people during Covid 19 in a way that made a real difference in their lives.

Quality advocacy needs to be protected and properly funded.



We supported many people to be part of decision-making processes, including people who communicate differently.

It is important that service providers include the person and their advocate in decision-making as there is no basis for a next of kin to be involved.

As services open up it is important that



- People can have visitors in residential services
- Day services are fully re-opened
- Respite is fully re-opened
- People are fully supported to keep in contact with family and friends



The move from group services to community based, person centred services must be sped up.



The financial and safety rights of people in residential services and living in the community must be protected.

Staff should not be moved from vital safeguarding teams to other jobs.



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