

Health & NDIS: Interface in the age of COVID-19





*The NSW Public Health Response to COVID-19 for Disability
Supported Accommodation*

Steven Davison - Director, Social Policy Implementation
NSW Ministry of Health


Vicky Sheppard - Deputy Director, Public Health Unit, South Eastern Sydney Local
Health District

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Update on Disability Resources

- **NSW Health**  have published COVID-19 (Coronavirus) – Public health guidance for the disability, home care and other personal care services sector - <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/disability-support.aspx>
- **NSW Health**  have published Easy Read translation and consumer information of Public Health Directions for COVID-19 - <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Documents/easy-read-pho-directions.pdf>
- The **National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)**  confirms that you can buy smart devices with your NDIS funds - <https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus/participants-coronavirus-covid-19/using-your-budget>
- The **National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)**  have published the Access Request Form (ARF) online so anyone who thinks they might be eligible for the NDIS can apply - https://www.ndis.gov.au/news/4757-access-request-form-now-available-download?fbclid=IwAR2qiSHi9AtShwNzyO_1WU6UTsGJCjYi_AQu9AkmCW_IPB9_XzzATtcEszl

Public Health Guidance for the Disability Sector

- **NSW Health**  have published information for disability support providers - <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/disability-support.aspx>
- Information on the webpage includes:
 - Guidance for community-based services and home visiting
 - Public Health Orders - Information for disability support providers and people with disability
 - Adapting risk management plans for COVID-19
 - Preventing an outbreak of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections in group residential settings
 - Preventing COVID-19 and other respiratory infections while attending clients in their home
 - Caring for a client with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 in a residential facility (including group homes and private residences)
 - Information for disability support providers - How to identify a potential COVID-19 outbreak in a residential facility and what to do next

Important message for health workers, carers and staff




If you're one of our wonderful health, residential care or staff workers, we want to say thanks – and remind you to take care of your own health too.

Even **very mild symptoms** such as a **scratchy throat, cough, runny nose** or **slight fever** mean you should get tested.

Find your nearest
COVID-19 clinic here:
www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19



COVID-19 Testing Prioritisation

- **NSW Health**  have published information on COVID-19 testing prioritisation - <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/testing-prioritisation.aspx>

Update on Discharge Delays

- SIL and SDA providers have been submitting lists of vacancies to NSW Health for 6 weeks. During that time over 150 NDIS participants have connected with providers and discharged from hospital. The updated SDA/SIL vacancy list is distributed regularly to the Local Health Districts and Specialty Health Networks.
- We wish to thank all providers for their help during the COVID-19 response. Any NDIS providers who still wish to submit vacancy information please email the MOH-NDIS@health.nsw.gov.au.
- The process of a participant matching themselves with a vacancy occurs during the hospital admission and is supported by two safeguards:
 1. NSW Health has policy that guides **safe transition of care** arrangement which applies to all staff. This ensures that all patients are discharged from hospital into safe and secure arrangements.
 2. The NDIA is responsible for ensuring that funding in participant plans allows access to all reasonable and necessary supports required by the participant to live safely in the community.

NSW Health staff work to ensure that participants in hospital are discharged into safe and secure locations where they are provided with all the services they require.

Role of The Public Health Unit

- In NSW calling **1300 066 055** will direct you to your local public health unit. Further information can be found on the NSW Health website - <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/Pages/phus.aspx>
- Your public health unit will help you arrange testing for your residents if they become unwell, and will support you to safely manage residents with COVID-19. When a person becomes infected they are referred to in public health terms as a 'case'.
- The public health unit receives notifications of all confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the local health district, and follows up each case to identify the source of infection, ensure the case is isolated, and identify and quarantine any close contacts of the case
- The public health unit will contact you if any cases have visited your facility and provide advice about measures to protect your residents, staff and visitors
- The public health unit can also be a link between your facility and hospitals should residents require assessment when your facility is affected by COVID-19

Case Study

Friday March 26 – Liverpool PHU notified of confirmed COVID-19 in a 40 year old woman. Case interview reveals that she is a disability support officer in a group home in South Eastern Sydney LHD.

7:27pm - Liverpool PHU notify Randwick PHU that the woman was infectious with COVID when she worked at the facility the day before she developed symptoms

Saturday March 27 – Randwick PHU contact manager of the disability service and confirm shifts and locations worked. All five residents of the facility were assessed as close contacts and put into quarantine; three staff were close contacts and had to be in home quarantine for 14 days after last contact, whereas other staff were casual contacts and could continue to work.

The home is closed to visitors, and staff need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE).

Daily Incident Management Team meetings between disability provider, service manager and public health unit.

Wednesday April 1 – one of the residents develops fever and shortness of breath. PHU arranges transfer to hospital for testing and isolation.

Thursday April 2 – swab negative; remains symptomatic, so a second swab collected

Friday April 3 – second swab negative, but no cause found; treated with antibiotics

April 4 – 7 remains in hospital for duration of quarantine period and gradually recovers.

April 7 – discharge back to the group home

Incident Action Plan

- ▶ NSW Health has developed a plan to respond to cases or contacts of COVID-19 in a disability setting
- ▶ Under the plan the PHU has a role to support group homes manage the situation
- ▶ The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and NDIA also have roles to support the response, including access to the national medical stockpile for personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies
- ▶ The State Health Emergency Operations Centre (SHEOC) can be called on for emergency supplies of PPE
- ▶ A public health response team is formed, including a representative of the group home to:
 - ▶ Evaluate the risks
 - ▶ Ensure that PPE is available and staff are trained in use
 - ▶ Advise on measures to isolate cases and close contacts
 - ▶ Arrange alternative accommodation (via NDIA) should appropriate isolation not be possible in the setting
 - ▶ Ensure measures are in place to restrict access, and screen any staff entering
 - ▶ Provide appropriate communication to staff, residents and their families about the situation
 - ▶ Meet regularly to respond to emerging issues such as residents or staff who become unwell

Contacts

- **Medical assistance**

- Anyone with an unexplained fever or new respiratory symptoms is encouraged to get tested for COVID-19 even if the symptoms are mild. A range of public and private testing options are available:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus-clinics.aspx>

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus-testing.aspx> (requires GP request)

- You can access medical assistance **for other issues** from your GP or hospital emergency department (ED) or by calling **healthdirect** on **1800 022 222** or visit at <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/>.
- If you have a medical emergency call 000.

- **NSW Ministry of Health**

- Email questions to the MOH-NDIS Inbox - MOH-NDIS@health.nsw.gov.au.

- **NDIA**

- Phone **1800 800 110**, contact your Local Area Coordinator or visit <https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus>.

- **NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission**

- Phone **1800 035 544** or visit the website at <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/>.