

COVID-19 and the particular risks for people with disability – Roundtable

15 SEPTEMBER 2020

Minutes and Actions Arising

The Chair opened the sixth meeting of the Roundtable and invited people with lived experience to discuss their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. National Heads of Motor Accident Injury Schemes representatives spoke about their experiences. They also spoke about the strategies used to maintain services for their participants during the pandemic.

Commonwealth, state and territory representatives provided an update on the COVID-19 response across the country. The Commonwealth Deputy Chief Medical Officer for Mental Health provided a welcome update on mental health programs and support initiatives available to people with disability.

Issues discussed:

- Mental health concerns including:
 - the negative impacts of prolonged lockdown and disrupted services on behaviour and skills
 - the potential need for reassessment for support services to assist in returning to normal life
 - the relevance and accessibility of broader mental health services to people with disability (BeyondBlue, Head to Health)
 - The importance of provider awareness of available services, including mental health services, and the promotion of these services to people with disability.
- Accessibility of COVID-19 testing and availability of alternative options, such as home testing.
- The need for public awareness of valid exemptions to wearing a mask (Victoria).
- Additional risks of COVID-19 transmission for people with disability who live in congregate settings and for children in care and protection.
- Particular impacts of the pandemic on children and young people with disability, including on their mental health and education.

Key actions:

- The Department will:
 - invite the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for Mental Health to continue to contribute to future Roundtable meetings
 - provide an update on programs and funding that address mental health for people with intellectual disability
 - explore potential inclusions to future versions of the Management and Operational Plan. This will include addressing congregate settings as an additional risk factor for COVID-19 transmission and the risks for children in care and protection.
- DHHS Victoria will follow up on how people can access the badges they have produced for people to communicate that they cannot wear a mask.
- The next Advisory Committee meeting agenda will include education and returning to school.
- The Department will look into developing an Easy Read resource on how to stay safe when using public transport.

- The NDIA will consider, as a priority, the support for families in reassessment following prolonged isolation, especially for those individuals with limited access to assistive technology during the pandemic.