



# Provider roundtable

## Responding to and learning from serious incidents

December 2021

### **The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission hosted a roundtable with providers on 9 November 2021 to hear feedback and generate ideas about how to improve responses and learnings from serious incidents in residential aged care.**

This document provides a summary of outcomes and feedback from participants.

The roundtable provided an opportunity to share early experiences and lessons learned on effective incident management following the introduction of the Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS).

Providers were also invited to comment on new and existing resources to improve incident reporting.

### **Positive outcomes for residents**

A recurring theme throughout the Roundtable from providers was the overwhelming benefits that SIRS has brought to residents' health and wellbeing.

'We have used SIRS to focus more closely on residents, on what is causing some behaviours. SIRS has allowed us to do a deep dive, a root cause analysis, something we may have missed in the past. The lives of residents have improved fantastically because we have found out what caused the behaviours of concern.'

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'SIRS prompts discussion and questioning and can help focus the conversation on what is important — how is this affecting the resident, have we done enough?'

## Challenges and ideas

### Support for families

Providers reported that:

- there is still a lack of understanding among family members and friends about the purpose of SIRS and its role in quality improvement, and
- family members need information about SIRS including what types of incidents must be reported, why, and where there are grounds to report to police.

‘Where a resident has engaged in inappropriate behaviour, it needs to be explained to families that lodging a report is not about demeaning their loved one but identifying a behaviour that needs addressing.’

### Police and GP responses

Providers also reported that:

- in some jurisdictions police are unaware of different provider and police responsibilities in relation to incident reporting
- GPs can sometimes get annoyed when contacted as part of the incident follow up process
- working with GPs on restrictive practices has been challenging as they don't always seem to have the same information or knowledge about requirements that providers do.

‘Further work is needed around educating and informing GPs about the new SIRS requirements. Could there be more networking or resources for GPs and does the AMA have a role here?’

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‘Resources and information for police would be helpful.’

### Education and support

Providers were positive about new and existing Commission SIRS resources and education:

‘The consumer video was great for residents but we used it for staff as well to give them a basic understanding.’

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‘The online decision support tool is really good. It has helped confirm managers’ opinions – giving them confidence that the way they are reporting is correct.’

Providers asked for further support in a number of areas including:

- guidance on how to investigate incidents and follow through with actions and planning, particularly for staff managing facilities. Roundtable participants were pleased to hear that an investigation resource is being developed
- more concise, easy visual guides about processes for busy nurses and other care staff
- additional storyboards and case studies that are helpful in educating staff, including more complex scenarios that providers struggle with.

‘If we’re making the workforce more mobile and flexible, developing the tools on apps would help so you avoid worrying about whether you’ve got the latest version of the document printed.’

### **My Aged Care provider portal**

Providers shared issues with using the My Aged Care Portal including:

- an inability to generate a report from the portal, making cross-referencing records difficult and time consuming
- the portal asking for a period of time when reporting an issue of neglect, which doesn’t always make sense.

‘Where an incident involves two residents, two separate submissions for each resident need to be lodged, e.g. if they hit each other. The trickiness of the portal is you get a number for one and the other and you are in and out of reports.’

## **Key benefits and learnings**

### **Investigation and analysis**

Providers shared that:

- analysis of incidents has improved with SIRS
- patterns can emerge when looking at reports across facilities, presenting opportunities for continuous improvement.

‘The SIRS process has encouraged a greater depth of investigation – we’re asking “Why” questions more often. We’re seeing teams not closing things off as quickly.’

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‘SIRS has been a welcome development, showing our organisation we have been doing things quite well in incident management. It has helped identify some gaps – where we need to ask relevant questions or upskill staff leaders in reporting.’

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‘We are building in expectations around reporting as part of staff orientation – “If in doubt, shout it out.”’



## Behaviour management

Providers reported:

- for residents with dementia and mental health issues, SIRS has highlighted the importance of being proactive in getting appropriate interventions
- before SIRS there were sometimes delays in bringing in other experts to help with behaviour management.

‘The link to restrictive practices has been a highlight for us — particularly improper use of restraints being reportable under SIRS. It has impacted how staff make decisions about giving someone a chemical restraint. They are taking more time to consider interventions that are not restrictive practice. This has had a positive outcome for residents but also dealing with GPs.’

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*The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders both past and present.*

‘With incident investigations, we had some issues with residents with dementia or cognitive impairment making statements or allegations and the team has found this challenging in the investigations process. Through SIRS we have learnt improvements — processes, procedures to investigate, upskilling staff around that.’

## Next steps

The Commission is reviewing all roundtable feedback to assist with:

- understanding issues impacting on incident management and reporting and further supports required to assist the sector
- refining content for a SIRS virtual workshop that has been staged twice in December, recommencing in January 2022
- convening further SIRS roundtables in 2022 to gain further valuable insights and experiences from providers
- finalising 2 new draft resources shared with participants — [Reporting serious incidents: Using a problem solving approach to enhance effective incident management](#) and [Reporting serious incidents: Practical tips for providers when making a notification.](#)



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