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Mother criticises Finian McGrath ‘dumping’ comment

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By Fiachra Ó Cionnaith

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A woman whose adult child has significant disabilities and is living in a health facility has heavily criticised Disabilities Minister Finian McGrath for saying some families are “dumping” relatives in the units.



Ina O’Dwyer, from Cahersiveen in Co Kerry, hit out at the remark in an open letter to Mr McGrath which is published in today’s Irish Examiner. Earlier this month, Mr McGrath said the “dumping” of relatives in facilities is a matter of concern for him and the Coalition.

In the letter , Ms O’Dwyer writes: “I feel so upset, so hurt, so angry and appalled that you would accuse me of ‘dumping’ my son into ‘an institution’ and accuse me of abandoning him there.

“I feel sickened. My baby, soon to be 41, is still just that. A baby. He can neither walk nor talk. He wears nappies and always will... I take huge offence you would endorse the notion people like my son are being deprived of their liberty.”

Asked about the letter, Mr McGrath said it was never his intention to offend anyone and that the “dumping” remark was meant to relate to the small number of families who do not visit relatives in care. He said he would be happy to meet with Ms O’Dwyer.

“My comments were never directed at people like Ina or families like that. As a parent with a daughter who has an intellectual disability I totally understand her [Ina’s] feelings. My comments were directed at people who never visit. In terms of the congregated settings issue, this year I will be moving more than 200 people into community living. As far as I’m concerned, for far too long people with disabilities have been treated as second class citizens.

“I fully respect the vast majority of these families, and I would be delighted to meet with Ina any time.”