

Fury as St Mary's row deepens

Residents placed on housing list without the knowledge of their families

FURIOUS FAMILY MEMBERS are demanding to know how the names of loved ones living at St Mary of the Angels in Beaufort were put on a housing list - without their knowledge or consent.

By Aidan O'Connor

It's the latest twist in the bitter row over plans to move 77 residents out of St Mary of the Angels to live in social housing around the county.

Many of the residents have severe intellectual and physical disabilities and require round-the-clock care.

Family members fear their loved ones simply could not

cope if they were moved out - and that some could die as a result.

This week, some family members have been finding out that two years ago, applications for housing were made for their sons, daughters and siblings - but nobody told them about it and no permission was given.

Jack Fitzpatrick (pictured) - one of the family members

leading the campaign to keep the Beaufort facility open - said he discovered that an application was made on behalf of his son, Bernard, without any knowledge or consent.

"I was told Bernard's name is on a housing list. I've asked for a copy of the application and I'm still waiting for it," he said.

Francis O'Connor from Blackwater said she called Kerry County Council this week after she heard that somebody had applied for a house on behalf of her sister Breda. ► **FUTURE: PAGE 20**



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Breda, who recently passed away, was a resident at St Mary of the Angels for 15 years.

"I was tipped off the night before. I called the council and was asked for Breda's date of birth and PPS number. They confirmed that she had applied and the address they had for Breda was St Mary of the Angels, Beaufort," she said.

Breda had Down Syndrome and was confined to a wheelchair. Francis was the family member who had to give consent and signed for medication, even the flu injection.

She said Breda would not have been capable to apply for a house - so somebody else did it without permission.

"I was shocked. How could they put her down for house? How could they do

this?" she said this week.

The revelations have further damaged trust between St John of God services, who run St Mary of the Angels, and family members of the residents.

Councillor Danny Healy-Rae said this week that he has been contacted by several family members who have discovered that applications were made without their knowledge.

He described the revelation as "utterly disgraceful".

"The families are being told that nothing would be done without the agreement of the families. The families were not informed and the residents are not capable of being involved.

"The person who made this decision should be made accountable," he said.

Jim O'Reilly from Two Mile School said that he

overheard a conversation about the issue in a pub this week and contacted Kerry County Council on Tuesday.

He said a council official confirmed to him that an application for a house had been made on behalf of his brother, Michael, a resident in Beaufort for 49 years.

"They told me that Michael's name has been on the list for two years. Michael can't talk, read or write, so how did he apply?

"Somebody applied on his behalf. They can't apply behind our backs," Jim said.

Kerry County Council says it will not comment on individual applications for housing.

A public relations company hired on behalf of St John of Gods did not respond to questions about the housing applications.