

Families of those who died during a Covid-19 outbreak in Dealgan House last year say they were 'saddened, but not surprised' by the revelations in the latest RTÉ Investigates programme on nursing homes.

Some of the families who lost loved ones during the Covid-19 outbreak in Dealgan House in April and May 2020 say the programme 'only bolsters the inalienable need for a public inquiry' into nursing homes.

In a statement, the Dundalk families said: 'We watched with sadness, but not surprise, the RTÉ Investigates programme on the nursing home sector. It showed how tragic events unfolded because of the weak policies in place around the private nursing home sector.

'Our concerns about what was happening in Dealgan House were raised with TDs, HIQA, the HSE and others and, even today, more than 14 months after the tragedy in Dealgan, we continue to have to navigate the web of agencies and organisations that have 'part-responsibility' for those in nursing home care.

'Trying to gather pieces of information, through Freedom of Information requests, in order to put together a picture of what happened in Dealgan has been time-consuming and frustrating to say the least.

'The efforts we have made as families have been done against the very difficult background of our personal grief at losing our loved ones.

'We continue to call for a public inquiry into the events in Dealgan House last year to ensure that the truth of what happened is revealed.

'We continue to wait for a formal decision from the coroner in Louth about whether inquests will be held into the deaths of our loved ones.

'We continue to wait for a substantive response from Health Minister Stephen Donnelly about our pleas for a public inquiry, despite having met him to put our case to him in October last year.

'Since then, hundreds more people have died in nursing homes and it is long past time that the State faces up to the fact that there are huge gaps in the legislative framework to protect those who are residents in nursing homes.

'We add our call to those from myriad other organisations for a public inquiry. The truth must be discovered, heard and learned from'.