



Guidelines to Choosing a Nursing Home

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Guidelines to Choosing a Nursing Home

Introduction

Selecting a nursing home is an important decision. These Guidelines are designed to help you to select a suitable residential setting for you or your family member. Deciding to move to a nursing home can be a very difficult decision and may involve a range of emotions for all those involved. It is important to know that you can seek support during this time from a number of people including your doctor, your public health nurse, your social worker and The Alzheimer Society of Ireland.

Helping another person to choose a nursing home or making the decision for another person who is unable to participate in the decision can be difficult. It is important to include the person you are helping when making decisions whenever possible and that the decisions taken reflect their needs and preferences. Your support can help your loved one to adjust to living in a new place.

Nursing Homes in Ireland

Since July 2009, The Social Services Inspectorate of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is legally responsible for the registration and inspection of all nursing homes for older people – including public, private and voluntary nursing homes.

Nursing homes must be registered before they can offer care. They must comply with the Health Act 2007 and meet the standards set out by HIQA. These standards are called the National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland.

It is useful to be aware of these standards as they provide valuable information about the standards that all registered Nursing Homes are required to meet. You can read the standards on www.hiqa.ie. If you would like further information you can contact HIQA at 021 2409300.

Currently the Health Service Executive, HSE, holds the list of all registered nursing homes in Ireland and you can access this list by;

- Contacting your local HSE office, a list of these offices is available on page 11.
- Logging onto the HSE website at www.hse.ie .
- Contacting the Alzheimer Society of Ireland National Helpline Service on 1800 341 341 or on helpline@alzheimer.ie.

Choosing a Nursing Home

If you are considering a nursing home, it is a good idea to visit a number of homes before making your final decision. Make a short list of homes which you are interested in and contact them for a preliminary discussion on availability and suitability. It may be useful to confirm the following information before arranging a visit:

- Is the nursing home registered and do they have a brochure outlining their services
- Is the Nursing Home participating in the Nursing Home Support Scheme?
- Is a place available in the nursing home and if not, how long is the waiting list?
- Can the nursing home provide care for people with dementia such as Alzheimer's throughout the course of the condition?

Where can I find information about a nursing home?

Each nursing home must have a brochure and a **Statement of Purpose**. This should be publicly available and you can ask to view it. The statement of purpose should provide you with information about how the home works with people with dementia.

Inspection reports for a nursing home are a source of information about the home and provide a reflection of the nursing home at a particular time. The report sets out an overview of the Home and this will help people to see if the nursing home works with people with dementia. The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is legally responsible for the inspection of all nursing homes. You can read inspection reports on www.hiqa.ie.

Another source of information which may be of help is the website www.myhomefromhome.ie run by The National Advocacy Programme Alliance (NAPA) working in association with Nursing Homes Ireland (NHI). My Home from Home aims to help older people and their families by providing access to information that may help in relation to finding a nursing home for a loved one.

It can be helpful to speak with residents and family members who are familiar with the home and with your doctor or your public health nurse also.

Visiting a Nursing Home

It is important to visit the nursing home you are interested in as this will give you a chance to see people living in the home, the staff and the setting.

Contact the Manager to arrange an appointment to visit the chosen home. Take a formal tour of the home but also try to visit on another occasion, at different times of the day and during a meal time. It may be useful to try to visit late in the morning or around midday as this will give you an opportunity to see the residents in their daily routine and what activities are taking place.

Do not be afraid to ask questions and spend time looking around. Before visiting, for your own reference, write a list of questions that you wish to ask (the following section and checklist may help with this). It is important that the care offered matches the needs of the person who may be living there as closely as possible. It is also important that the person to be cared for can visit the nursing home that is being proposed, where this is appropriate.

It may be useful to try to speak with residents and their family members about their experience with the home, ask the manager for resident and family testimony. You may also be able to ask people you trust if they have had personal experience with a particular nursing home.

Points for Consideration when Visiting a Nursing Home

General areas that may influence your choice:

- **Atmosphere:**
 - Is it cheerful and friendly?
 - Does the home seem like a comfortable place to live?
 - Do the current residents appear happy and responsive?
 - Are residents involved in activities and encouraged to do as much for themselves as they can?
- **Maintenance:**
 - Is the home clean and well kept?
 - Is the home free from overpowering or unpleasant odours?
 - Are there smoke alarms in the rooms and common areas?
 - Is the temperature comfortable for the residents?
- **Location:**
 - Is the home easy to get to so family and friends can visit? - frequent visits are a good way to ensure a person does well in a nursing home.
- **Staff:**
 - Do you find that staff are helpful, friendly and informative?
 - Is there enough staff to ensure high quality care?
 - What is the staff to resident ratio?
 - Does the home complete background checks on staff?
 - What training and continuing education opportunities are in place.
- **Accommodation:**
 - Will the person have to share a room, if so will they have privacy in their own area?
 - Can the person bring some of their own possessions, small items of furniture, a favourite picture etc?
 - Will they have storage space?
 - Is there a policy to protect resident's possessions?
- **Living Area:**
 - Is the area pleasant, can residents sit in groups and chat?
 - Is there more than one room where residents can sit or see visitors?
 - Is there a garden where residents can sit or walk safely?
 - Is the noise level in common areas comfortable?
- **Services:**

- What is available to residents?
- does the home provide regular occupational therapy or physiotherapy sessions
- Are hairdressing and chiropodist services available?
- **Daily Routine:**
 - How is a day structured?
 - When are meal times?
 - Are there designated activity times and visiting times?
 - Is there flexibility in the routine?
 - Are residents treated with courtesy and respected as individuals and allowed to make choices about their daily routines - for example are food preferences considered?
- **Activities:**
 - What activities are available, how are they planned / scheduled?
 - Can family members take part on occasion?
 - Are there religious, social, recreational or cultural activities?
 - Are activities in place for residents who may be confined to bed?
- **Visiting times:**
 - Are visiting times flexible?
 - Is access for children possible?
 - What restrictions are there?
- **Excursions:**
 - Can you take the person out of the home for periods of time?
 - Can you go out for lunch or for a drive?
- **Residents committee:**
 - Is there a residents committee?
 - Do residents / families have a say in the way the home operates?
 - Are there relatives meetings?
- **Medical Emergencies:**
 - Are there arrangements with local hospitals in case of emergency?
 - Can the person's own doctor care for them at that hospital?
 - Under what circumstances does the home call the family or doctor?
- **Preventative care health programmes:**
 - Are immunization programmes available, example the Flu shot?

Dementia Specific areas for consideration

- **Secure environment:**
 - Is the home secure internally and externally?
 - What are the security and monitoring arrangements?

- **Staff:**
 - Are staff trained to work with people with dementia?
 - Are they aware of needs around communication, handling and possibly medication?
 - Are staff aware of nutritional and hydration needs for a person with dementia?

- **Activities suited to people with dementia:**
 - Residents should be involved in activities without feeling stressed.
 - Does the home engage in reminiscence or art and music therapy?
 - Also ask about alternative therapies such as hand massage and aromatherapy and activities for people who may be confined to bed.

- **Role of former carer / family in continued care:**
 - Can a former carer / family member continue to be involved with the care plan of the person with dementia in some ways? For example, can they help develop and review the care plan, informing the home about existing routines, likes, dislikes etc.
 - Can they be present at meal times on occasion?
 - Will the home inform people about achievements and how the person relates to other residents / staff etc as well as any issues that may arise?

- **Medication:**
 - How does the nursing home deal with medication needs?

- **Restraints:**
 - Does the nursing home have a policy on the use of restraints?
 - In what context would restraints be used and removed?

- **Capacity to care for Alzheimer / dementia resident through all stages:**
 - Will increased impairment (inability to walk or incontinence) or physical illness result in a need to transfer or discharge?

The checklist on the next page may be useful when visiting a nursing home.

Check list for choosing a Nursing Home

Name of Nursing Home: _____

Atmosphere	
Maintenance	
Location	
Staff (including dementia training)	
Accommodation	
Living Areas	
Services	
Daily Routine	
Activities suited to people with dementia	

Visiting Times and trips out	
Residents Committee	
Role of Carers / family	
Medical Emergencies	
Preventative Care Health Programmes	
Security	
Medication	
Capacity to care for all stages of dementia	
Costs and payment options	

Costs and Finance

According to the new National Quality Standards for Residential care settings for older people in Ireland– a nursing home must agree a contract with every new entrant to the home within one month of admission. This contract must include details of the services to be provided for that person and the fees to be charged. A person must not be charged fees which are not set out in the contract.

Costs differ across nursing homes and charges should be discussed in detail with the nursing home proprietor. The list of questions below may be of help to you when discussing the cost of care in the chosen home:

- What is the basic fee and what does that include?
- If you are in receipt of state support under the Nursing Home Support Scheme what costs does this cover?
- Do they charge extra for other services or care for special medical needs?
- It is important to establish what is considered an extra cost, incontinence pads, laundry, hairdressing etc may not be covered by the stated charge.
- Is a deposit required and are payment plans available

Financial Supports

The Nursing Home Support Scheme

The Nursing Home Support Scheme is a source of financial support for people who need long term nursing care. The scheme will apply to both public and private nursing home places. Under the scheme, every person who needs long term care will make a contribution to the cost of their care and this contribution will be based on their means.

The Health Service Executive will be provided with a set level of funding each year to administer the scheme. It is hoped that there will be adequate funding to support everyone who is eligible for state support in relation to long term care however there may be situations where it will be necessary for the person's name to go on a waiting list until funding becomes available.

Your local Nursing Home Support Office will provide the application form, answer any queries about the scheme, help you complete your application form if needed and provide you with the list of approved

nursing homes for your area. You will find the contact details for these offices on the next page.

You can also contact the Citizens Information Service to help you complete your application form. You can call their helpline on 0761 074000 to find out where your nearest Citizens Information Centre is.

Please see our Nursing Home Support Scheme Information booklet for more detailed information.

Dependent Relative Tax Credit

If the person is living in an approved nursing home and you contribute to the nursing home fees, you may be entitled to claim some of the expenses involved. Information on this is available by visiting the Revenue website on www.revenue.ie. You will also find Lo-call contact numbers for your region on the website or in the State Directory section of the telephone directory.

Covenants

Covenants may still be made for people over 65 or those who are permanently incapacitated. A Deed of Covenant is a legal document under which one person agrees to pay a certain sum of money each year to another person without receiving any benefit in return. The advantage is that the person paying the money can effectively not pay tax on it. The money is transferred to someone who does not have a taxable income or pays a lower rate of tax than the person giving the money. The covenant is a legal document but you do not need to go to a lawyer to draw one up. You can get a Deed of Covenant form from Revenue or from your local tax office. For more information on this area see the Citizens Information website at www.citizensinformation.ie or call 0761 074000

List of HSE Nursing Home Support Offices:

If you would like a list of registered nursing homes or want more information about the nursing home support scheme you can contact the office nearest to you.

Carlow / Kilkenny	HSE Nursing Homes Support Office, Community Services, James's Green, Kilkenny. Ph: 056 7784761 / 056 7784633
Cavan / Monaghan	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, Lisdarn, Cavan Ph: 049 4373155/112/191
Cork / Kerry	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, Floor 1, Aras Slainte, Wilton Road, Cork Ph: 021 492 3536/37/38/39/40/41/42
Donegal	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, Navenny House, Navenny Street, Ballybofey Ph: 074 9189172
Dublin South/Wicklow/Kildare	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, 2nd Floor Beech House, 101-102 Naas Business Park, Naas, Co Kildare. W91RC85 Ph: 045 920 000
Dublin North City and County	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, Civic Office, Main St, Ballymun, D9 Ph: 01 8467148
Galway	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, Community Services, La Nua, Ballybane Neighbourhood Village, Castlepark Road, Ballybane, Galway Ph: 091 748485
Laois / Offaly	HSE Nursing Homes Support Office, Bury Quay, Tullamore, Co. Offaly Ph: 057 93 27823
Limerick/Clare/North Tipperary	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, St. Josephs Hospital, Mulgrave St. Limerick Ph: 061 461499
Longford / Westmeath	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, Health Centre, Longford Rd, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath Ph: 044 9394995
Louth/Meath	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, Unit 3, Ardee Business Park, Hale Street, Ardee, Co. Louth Ph: 041 6871515/529/525
Mayo	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, St. Mary's Headquarters, Castlebar, Co. Mayo. Ph: 094 9049176
	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, Government

Roscommon	Buildings, Convent Road, Roscommon. Ph: 0906 637561/546
Sligo / Leitrim	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, Markievicz Hse, Barrack St. Sligo Ph: 071 9155193
South Tipperary	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, Community Care Centre, Western Road, Clonmel. Co. Tipperary. Ph: 052 6177283
Waterford	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, Waterford Community Services, Cork Rd, Waterford Ph: 051 842963
Wexford	HSE Nursing Home Support Office, Wexford Community services, Georges Street, Wexford Ph: 053 9185715/716

Nursing Home Regulations

Nursing homes in Ireland are regulated under the Health Act 2007 and will be inspected against the National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People. These standards are available at www.hiqa.ie. If you would like further information you can email info@hiqa.ie or call 021 2409300 for Head Office Reception or for Dublin Regional Office 01 8147400.

From the 1st of July 2009, the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) of the Health Information and Quality Authority is legally responsible for the registration and inspection of all residential care centres for older people (including public, private and voluntary nursing homes) Inspection reports are published on the Authority's website www.hiqa.ie.

Complaints Procedure:

If you have any concerns regarding the care or conditions in a Nursing Home you have the right to complain.

It is advisable to take up your complaint initially with the nursing home. Ask for a meeting to discuss the situation with the manager. HIQA provide an easy to read overview of the national standards that nursing homes must meet and you can read this on www.hiqa.ie.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint or if for any reason you do not wish to pursue the matter with the nursing home, a very useful website is www.healthcomplaints.ie giving lots of information concerning complaints about health and social care services in Ireland.

You can contact the Health Service Executive or the Health Information and Quality Authority depending on the type of complaint or comment you wish to make.

If your comment or complaint concerns the level of service in the nursing home you can contact the HSE 'Your Service, Your Say'. You can contact this service by calling 1850 24 1850, emailing yoursay@hse.ie or by writing to any HSE local health office.

Depending on the nature or seriousness of your complaint a HSE staff member will attempt to resolve your complaint locally or a complaints officer will look into the issue raised. Normally a complaints officer will look into your complaint within 30 days.

If your comment or complaint concerns a risk to the person living in the nursing home, you should contact the Health Information and Quality Authority, HIQA. You can phone the HIQA helpline at 021 2409646 or email concerns@hiqa.ie or alternatively complaints@hiqa.ie or telephone 021 2409300. At the bottom of their website you will see "concern about services" which has further information.

Conclusion

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland has taken great care to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet. The Society is not liable for any inaccuracies, errors, omissions or misleading information contained herein.

If you would like to discuss or comment on the information contained within, please contact the Alzheimer National Helpline Service by calling 1800 341 341 or emailing helpline@alzheimer.ie. The Helpline is open to calls Monday to Friday, 10 am to 5 pm and Saturdays 10am-4pm. You can also leave a message with your contact details and we will return your call.

The Helpline is a free and confidential information and support service.



Alzheimer National Helpline
FREEPHONE 1800 341 341
helpline@alzheimer.ie

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