



Quality Living, Quality Care

Living in a Nursing Home

A photograph showing a young nurse in a white uniform with a stethoscope around her neck, smiling warmly as she holds the hand of an elderly woman with short white hair. The woman is wearing a patterned hospital gown and looking back at the nurse. The background is a bright, softly lit room, likely a hospital or nursing home, with a window and some blurred objects visible.

Living in a nursing home opens up a new world of opportunity. You meet new friends with shared life stories and interests. You get round-the-clock expert nursing care and support from dedicated staff. Your family and friends have the comfort and reassurance of knowing that you are getting the 24-hour specialist care you need.

In the nursing home, you will be able to take part in a range of social and recreational activities that let you enjoy a better quality of life. You will live independently, take pleasure in your favourite pastimes and – if you want – learn new skills.

It's all about choice. You choose the nursing home that best suits your needs. You make the decisions – together with your family and the staff – about your day-to-day life in the nursing home.

“We see our Residents as beginning a new stage in their lives, which we help to facilitate. Resident's rights and choices are respected and our Residents play an active role in how the home is managed on a daily basis. A sense of purpose enhances their quality of life and staff are enriched by residents' knowledge and life experience,”

**Eileen Burke,
NHI Director of Nursing Award Winner 2011,
Innis Ree Lodge, Roscommon**

Will I lose my independence if I move into a nursing home?

No. Nursing home care is designed to let you live independently and fulfil your potential. Before you move into the nursing home, staff will meet you to talk about your health and general needs. This meeting will focus on your abilities and your preferences. The staff will tell you if you need any aids or adaptations and assist you in obtaining such supports to help you stay independent.

Will I be able to choose what I do day-to-day?

Yes. When you first meet the nursing home staff, they'll prepare your 'care plan'. This will include things such as what foods you like or don't like, and what time you want to get up or go to bed. Your preferences will be written down so that all the staff will know your likes and dislikes. Staff will review your care plan with you every three to six months or more often if you want or if your needs change. It's important to know that, in the nursing home, you have the right to choose what you want or don't want.

Will I be able to see my family and friends?

Of course. Visitors are welcome. All nursing homes have comfortable visitor rooms where you can meet with family and friends, often in private. In addition, nursing homes can arrange other ways of keeping in touch such as telephone, email, Skype and Facebook.

What kind of facilities can I expect in a nursing home?

Nursing homes generally have separate rooms for activities, visitors and watching television. Many have rooms for reflection and gardens where you can relax. You can even help in the garden, if you want. Some homes have education centres, gyms, spa areas and shops.

Will I be able to go on holiday or stay overnight with family and friends?

Yes. The nursing home will arrange this, wherever possible, and will help you to prepare. All you have to do is ask.

I don't really like bingo. Are there any other activities in nursing homes?

Absolutely. Nursing home staff try to make the home a happy, lively place to be. Residents, family and staff choose the activities. These may include gardening, cooking, music, shopping, exercise or any other activity that you and your friends enjoy.

Many nursing homes employ people to organise activities to match residents' needs, abilities and interests. As far as possible, staff will make sure that you continue to enjoy the pastimes you love.

Nursing homes also give you the chance to try new leisure activities and learn new skills. Many take part in exchange programmes with local schools, where students visit the nursing home to help residents learn new skills such as how to use the internet and email, or try out new arts and crafts.

Nursing homes are also very pro-active in engaging with their local communities to bring local people and residents together for social outings.

Community engagement:

Patrick Byrnes of Innis Ree Lodge, Roscommon, interacting with Emma Kenny and Aisling Cosgrove of Lanesboro Community College



Is the food in nursing homes bland and tasteless?

No. Nursing homes employ chefs and catering teams to prepare meals to the highest standards. They change menus regularly to give greater variety – guided by what residents ask for. Some nursing homes have their own restaurants and can arrange for you to talk with a dietician about your dietary and nutritional needs.

“We are what we eat’ and we, as professional Care Caterers and Chefs, have the responsibility and the privilege of catering for the wellbeing of our residents. We strive in creating and delivering a unique dining experience for the residents in respect of their preferences, their needs and adding those innovations that make food a very important ingredient to spice up our lives.”

Emanuele Ferri, Head Chef, Haven Bay Care Centre,
NHI Catering and Nutrition Award Winners 2010 and 2011



Will I have to leave all my belongings behind when I go to live in a nursing home?

Will anyone listen to me if I have a complaint?

Will I have any say in the running of the nursing home?

No. You can bring treasured possessions such as photos, paintings, ornaments and, in some cases, furniture with you. The staff want you to have your personal belongings around you because they understand how precious these are to you.

Definitely. Your views and opinions are very important to the nursing home. Managers need to know what you are not happy with so that they can improve the care you get.

Each nursing home also has a formal policy on complaints management because, under Irish law, you have the right to make a complaint and to have it dealt with. The nursing home will tell you about its complaints policy.

Yes. Most nursing homes have residents' and relatives' councils and many have volunteer advocates who will help residents express their wishes, access their entitlements and assert their rights. The councils meet to talk about issues that affect residents' daily lives in the nursing home. Their suggestions and comments are given to management to improve services.



Activity: Sr Agnes Murray & Sr Raphael Wynne participating in activities at Innis Ree Lodge, Roscommon



Relaxation: Antoinette O'Ceallaigh pictured with her father James Reilly in the garden of Ashford House Nursing Home, Co Dublin

Is a nursing home a good place to spend the final years of my life?



Tranquility: Maura Heron, right, pictured with her daughter Pat Folan, relaxing on the grounds of Áras Chois Fharráige, Spiddal, Co Galway

Yes. Nursing homes respect your rights and dignity. They will write down your wishes about how they can help you cope with your final days. For example, this might include where, ideally, you want to die, who you want with you when you pass away, and your spiritual or religious wishes.

Nursing homes provide accommodation for the family of a resident who is dying and give comfort, support and food. They are very conscious of people's religious and spiritual beliefs and will always try to take these into account. Nursing home staff will support your family and friends in their grief and will give you the option to be 'waked' in the home.

Nursing homes also have close working relationships with local hospices and palliative care teams. When needed, they will bring in these services to give specialist care and comfort.

I've heard some bad reports about nursing homes and am worried about my care if I decide go into a nursing home.



Support: Mary Massey, Ashford House Nursing Home resident, pictured with Ann Marie Mitchell, Director of Nursing

Homes are designed to be comfortable and relaxed places to live. They provide specially-trained staff, a wide range of activities and opportunities to meet new people and to make friends. Nursing homes are 'homes' to about 20,000 people in Ireland. This kind of information doesn't make the news.

If you were concerned about your treatment or the treatment of a loved one, you can contact the Health Information and Quality Authority or HIQA for short. HIQA makes sure that nursing homes provide high standards of care and safety to the people who live in them. HIQA is an independent authority. That means it works to achieve your best interests. It regularly inspects homes. It talks with residents about how they find living there. If HIQA found that standards were not being met they would take the necessary steps to improve them.



“Until I got here, I had a very negative perception of nursing homes but this has changed completely for the better. The activities are very good here and the conditions are wonderful. I have a great rapport and a good laugh with my carers and you feel so safe here,”

Sylvia Moloney,
NHI Resident Achievement
Award Winner 2010,
St Luke’s Home, Cork.

“Moving into a nursing home was quite a daunting prospect. However, we humans are good at adapting. I got to know my carers and due to the personal level of assistance they provide, you gradually let them into your life.

A lot of activities take place within the home and a youth group comes in to do a lot with us. I’ve even undertaken kayaking! There is always someone to have a chat with and lend a hand, and the home has a nice, positive atmosphere. People here are treated with great respect and care,”

Julia Thurmann,

(pictured right with Marty Whelan)
Hamilton Park Care Facility, Dublin,
NHI Resident Achievement Award 2011





“Nobody likes the thoughts of leaving their own home, but I have been able to make my room very homely and have things from home around me. I can choose to be with other people or I can choose to be on my own if I prefer. I don’t ever need to feel lonely. I am free to make my own decisions and can make choices for myself. In some ways it is the best of both worlds; my family are nearby and I can still please myself about what I want to do, when I get up or when I go to bed, and live a very independent life,”

Merrial Davis,
NHI Resident Achievement Award Winner 2012,
Glendale Nursing Home, Carlow.



Outings: Residents pictured with staff of St Martha's Nursing Home, Co Tipperary, on a visit to Bunratty Castle & Folk Park, Co Clare

“For us, care is always about a person’s right to a warm and loving home and a meaningful life, connected to families and friends. Care is designed completely around the needs of our residents. We focus on making the transition from their home to Moorehall Lodge a positive experience by understanding how each new resident wants to live. We endeavour to get to know their needs and preferences, their life history, interests, likes and dislikes.

This creates an individualised atmosphere where people maintain links with their community, can flourish independently and have their voice heard. We work hard to help residents make new friends and keep existing relationships and friendships. For me, the essence of what we do at Moorehall Lodge is to create an environment where people flourish,”

Geraldine Clinton,
NHI Carer of the Year 2012, Moorehall Lodge, Co Louth.

“Nursing homes are part of community life throughout Ireland. We place great emphasis and importance upon interacting with our local communities and contributing towards life within them. We’ve a long tradition of working closely with our local community and in ensuring our residents remain connected to it. We will continue this flourishing relationship into the future,”

Frances Neilan,

Director of Nursing Services, Carrigoran House, Co Clare
(NHI Community Initiative Award winner 2012)

“Our residents are people who are looking to staff to develop friendship and relationships. The primary purpose of our activity is to bring harmony to residents, make them feel relaxed, deliver satisfaction and support their self-esteem. The goal of activity is to enable participation with other people, bring about social relations and allow our residents feel inclusive within the nursing home and wider society,”

Piotr Jokiel,

NHI Care Awards 2011 Activity Coordinator Award winner,
Bloomfield Health Services, Co Dublin

“As a nurse I pride myself on putting you, the resident, at the centre of the care I provide. We develop person-centered care plans so you tell me what’s best for you, not the other way round,”

Brian McNamara,

NHI Registered Nurse of the Year 2012,
Greenpark Nursing Home, Co Galway.

Choosing a Nursing Home & financing your care

The Nursing Home Support Scheme (Fair Deal)

The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (Fair Deal) is a scheme of financial support for people who need long-term nursing home care. Under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme, you will make a contribution towards the cost of your care and the State will pay the balance. This applies whether the nursing home is public, private or voluntary.

- Step 1** is an application for a Care Needs Assessment. The Care Needs Assessment identifies whether or not you need long-term nursing home care.
- Step 2** is an application for State Support. This will be used to complete the Financial Assessment which determines your contribution to your care and your corresponding level of financial assistance ("State Support"). Steps 1 and 2 must be completed by all applicants.
- Step 3** is an optional step which should be completed if you wish to apply for the Nursing Home Loan (this is termed "Ancillary State Support" in the legislation).

Your Contribution to Care

The scheme is administered by the HSE. Having looked at your income and assets, the Financial Assessment will work out your contribution to care. You will contribute 80% of your assessable income and 7.5% of the value of any assets per annum. However, the first €36,000 of your assets, or €72,000 for a couple, will not be counted at all in the financial assessment. Where your assets include land and property in the State, the 7.5% contribution based on such assets may be deferred and collected from your estate. This is the optional Nursing Home Loan element of the scheme which is legally referred to as "Ancillary State Support".

To learn more about the Nursing Home Support Scheme (Fair Deal) and your eligibility contact:

- HSE on the HSE infoline on **1850 24 1850**, refer to the HSE website **www.hse.ie**, or contact your local NHSS office (a listing is provided on the HSE website).
- The Department of Health has a section on their website dedicated to the Fair Deal, in particular the FAQ section details the most commonly asked questions and it is a very useful resource. You can visit it at **www.dohc.ie/issues.fair_deal**
- Visit the publications section of the NHI website **www.nhi.ie** to download *NHI's Nursing Home Care it's your choice... Advice on choosing a Nursing Home & Understanding the "Fair Deal"* and *NHI's Guide to Choosing a Nursing Home*

Important to know!

It is important to realise that Fair Deal only covers the cost of bed and board and nursing care. Fair Deal specifically excludes social programmes, therapies, dental treatments, chiropody and the list goes on. NHI has, from the outset, strongly objected to these services being kept outside Fair Deal and will continue to do so. This is incomprehensible and in direct contravention of many of the national quality standards. A person retains their existing entitlements under other schemes such as the Medical Card scheme.

Choosing a Nursing Home

The right to choose where to live is enshrined in the Nursing Home Support Scheme (Fair Deal). Before even beginning to choose the range of residential care settings available to you, make a list of the ideal attributes you want from the nursing home. The attributes that are worth considering include the atmosphere and religious outlook, the food and recreational activities, and any special needs and preference you or your relative may have.

A listing of NHI member homes is available at www.nhi.ie. A visit to the nursing home/nursing homes you are considering is recommended. As nursing homes are busy places, it is advisable to make an appointment with the nursing home initially. When visiting the home you should:

Take a formal tour with the Director of Nursing or designated deputy.

Ask questions during your tour. This is your choice and you should be prepared with all of the answers you need to make it.

Look around to get a better picture of the services, activities, and quality of care and life for the residents.

While you are carrying out your research and when you are visiting the home, there are some questions worth asking for consideration re the wellbeing of yourself or your relative:

Is the nursing home close to family and friends so they can visit often?

Is the nursing home close to shops, clubs, church or other places you may wish to visit?

Are you able to bring in personal possessions/ furniture from home?

Does the nursing home have a regular schedule of activities for you to participate in?

How are residents and families encouraged to participate in developing their care plan?

Tax Relief on nursing home fees

You can claim tax relief for nursing home expenditure under the general scheme for tax relief on certain medical expenses. 'Maintenance' in an approved nursing home qualifies for relief. Revenue has a list of nursing homes that are approved for tax relief. You can claim tax relief on nursing home expenditure at your highest rate of tax (either 20% or 41%).

If you are paying the nursing home fees, you can get the tax relief - whether you are in the nursing home yourself or you are paying for another person to be there. A long-term patient in a nursing home who pays tax under PAYE can apply to have the expenses allowed in his or her tax credit certificate. For additional information see Revenues information leaflet IT 6 Medical Expenses Relief. You should apply for the tax relief as soon as you start paying nursing home fees, as the tax relief can be applied to the current tax year.

Information provided correct as of compilation July 2013.

What is the NHI?

Nursing Homes Ireland is the representative organisation for the private and voluntary nursing homes sector. We work hard to protect the rights of people living in nursing homes. We also provide training, support and advice to our members to make sure they give the best possible care. Our goal is to make sure that everyone who chooses a nursing home for the next step in their lives experiences a happy, caring and safe environment.

Nursing Homes Ireland works closely with the Department of Health, the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and other relevant groups to make sure that nursing home residents are safe and get a high quality of care. Many nursing homes have volunteer advocates who act as a voice for residents who may not be able to speak up for themselves.

Before you make your decision about nursing home care, talk to us. We can give you more information and answer any questions you may have. Simply phone us on **(01) 429 2570** or visit **www.nhi.ie**.



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Pictured on the cover are, from top left, clockwise:

Nora Folan with Christy the dog in Áras Cois Fharraige, Galway; Maura Heron and her daughter Pat Folan, Áras Cois Fharraige; Antoinette O'Ceallaigh with her father James in Ashford House Nursing Home, Dublin; Delores Naughten pictured in Innis Ree Lodge Nursing Home, Roscommon, participating in activities with Kevin Sorohan, a student at Cloontuskert National School; Mary Massey with Ann Marie Mitchell, Director of Nursing, Ashford House Nursing Home.



We have done our best to make sure that the information in this leaflet is accurate, complete and up-to-date. However, we accept no responsibility for any mistakes or omissions.