

“You need to consider a Nursing Home place for your loved one”

These are the words that strike, worry, fear, guilt, sadness and many more emotions in people when they hear them for the first time. What will be involved? What will it cost? Where will I find one? When will she/he have to move? Hopefully I can help you weave your way painlessly through the process.

With the introduction of Health Information and Quality Authority Standards for Older People (HIQA) you will be able to relax, there are a lot of great Nursing Homes in Ireland to choose from with very high standards of care to offer.

WHERE DO I START

If the person is in a hospital follow the advice of the social worker who will keep you informed of the process, if not discuss it with your GP or Public Health Nurse.

Initially you should consider the possibility of Nursing Homes Support Scheme, a “Fair Deal”.

This is a new scheme of financial support for people who need long-term nursing home care. It replaces the Subvention Scheme which has been in existence since 1993. 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 Private, Public or Voluntary.

The scheme has a number of steps and these are set out in the detailed Nursing Home Support Scheme information Booklet which can be downloaded: **Nursing Homes Support Scheme, a Fair Deal website**.

All the information you require is on this site i.e.

- Applying for the scheme
- Care Needs Assessment
- Financial Assessment
- Nursing Home Loan
- Next Steps
- Contact for your Local Nursing Home Support Office
- Lists of all Public and Private Nursing Homes and their weekly costs

This is a lengthy process.... and not for the faint hearted, my advice would be to start it as soon as you are asked to consider a nursing home.

CHOOSE A NURSING HOME

You will be given a list of Nursing Homes to look at, and asked to visit some and make a list of your top 5 or 6.

Make an appointment with the nursing homes you wish to view, and you will find that the senior staff will have the time to spend with you. If you arrive unannounced without an appointment you may not get an opportunity to see the home, or a very quick tour which will be insufficient to make a judgement.

Many of these will not be suitable to you for various reasons, so make a short list before you start of your own criteria. e.g.

- **First Impressions** you will immediately know if you like the nursing home or not – my advice is go with your gut feeling
- **Geography** of the Nursing Home, it may be near where your loved one lived, but think about the family and is it convenient for them to visit?
- **Services offered** what do the nursing home offer in terms of clinical services, physio, Local GP, Speech and Language, Optician, Dental Care, level of Trained Nurses and carers etc?

- **Dementia Care** Is this catered for specifically if it is your requirement.
- **Activities**, does the nursing home have an activity coordinator, and are these services included in the cost?
- **Hairdressing**, This should be offered, particularly for women, or some arrangement to have it included
- **Religious Services** what is available, this is very important to many people.
- **Gardens**, Is there a nice garden to sit outside, or enjoy from a warm spot indoors?
- **Catering**, ask about the food and times of serving, view recent menus if possible?
- **Bed Availability**, is there any availability for you, or is there a waiting list, if so ask how long it is?
- **Room Occupancy**, is it a single room with en suite, or multiple occupancy that is available?
- **Voting availability** this is very important, particularly to older people
- **Costs**, find out the weekly costs, what is included, and what is extra, normal extras would be Hairdressing, Chiropody etc, things you would normally pay for if you were at home.
- **Take the telephone number** of the nursing home, in case you find you would like to ask further questions or visit again.
- **Take the potential Resident along with you if you can**, if not include them in the process and decision making where possible, this will make the transfer easier for them if they have been involved.
- You will find that the Hospital staff will be keen to offer support to you to find a nursing home, however ensure it is the right one for you and your family, don't be pressured into the first one with an available bed, with the intention to transfer on later, it is not advisable from a clinical point of view to move elderly people from place to place.

When you have your short list organised, you can check the last inspection report on the HIQA website, good or bad. Go to the website, put in the details of the Nursing Home(s) you are considering and you can read their last report. This is a good guide if you have a few you are finding it hard to choose from and you want to narrow it down.

Don't worry if they don't appear settled right away, in my experience it takes 3 – 6 weeks for residents to settle in to a New Home. They are meeting new people, sleeping in a strange bed, getting used to others sharing their home, and it can leave them unsettled for a while. Usually by six weeks they are happy and content.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY DON'T SETTLE

Most Nursing Homes offer 4-6 weeks settling in period, so if all else fails and you know this is not the place for them, you can move your loved one to another Nursing Home.

I hope you find this guide helpful to you. Picking out the right Nursing Home is a very hard and emotional journey for any family to undertake, but when you make your decisions and your loved one seems happy and content in their new home, it will all have been worthwhile.

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