

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Nursing Homes Ireland Survey Reveals Majority Fear Lack of Local Nursing Home Care Amid Growing Crisis

“Nearly 6 in 10 express deep concerns about availability of nursing home care in their communities”

New research commissioned by Nursing Homes Ireland (NHI) has revealed that nearly 6 in 10 people in Ireland are either very or extremely concerned that their loved ones may be unable to secure nursing home care in their local community. This startling figure highlights an ongoing crisis as nursing home closures have escalated across the country since 2018.

Conducted by Coyne Research, the survey results shed light on public anxiety about access to nursing home care, particularly as increasing operational costs and the pressures on the Fair Deal scheme have resulted in the closure of at least 77 nursing homes since 2018. Last year alone, 10 homes were forced to shut, with a further 7 this year, contributing to the loss of more than 2,600 beds. Most of these closures have occurred in rural areas, deepening concerns over the availability of local care.

A Threat to the Community Care Model

This alarming trend comes at a time when Ireland's older population is growing rapidly. In the next 20 years, the number of people aged over 65 is projected to rise by 66%, with the population of those over 85 expected to more than double. These demographic shifts place further strain on the already stretched nursing home sector and call into question the sustainability of local nursing home care.

The survey's findings align with a broader societal issue—nursing home care in Ireland is at a critical juncture. The ongoing closures are dismantling the community-based care model and contradicting the goals of Sláintecare, which aims to provide care closer to home. The closure of local nursing homes is forcing families apart and displacing elderly residents from their familiar communities and support networks. HIQA has also raised concerns about the impacts of these closures on nursing home residents' well-being.

NHI CEO Calls for Urgent Government Action

NHI CEO, Tadhg Daly, emphasised the urgency of the situation and called on the government to take immediate action:

"This is not just a healthcare issue; it is a challenge for society as a whole. Our ageing population is increasing rapidly, and we should be celebrating this fact. However, if we don't act now, the consequences will be profound. We need to save our nursing homes and ensure that they remain a vital part of our communities. The sustainability of the nursing home sector must become a priority for all—government, families, and local communities. Planning now will prevent heartbreak later."

Mr Daly urged policymakers to act and encouraged collaboration across sectors:

"We are hosting our Annual Conference on the 19th of September, where we will discuss these wider issues in depth. We are calling on policymakers, government officials, and the entire healthcare sector to meet the challenges of caring, together. The projected growth in the number of older people in Ireland means we cannot afford to delay. It's vital that we take collective responsibility and put the necessary supports in place to ensure nursing home care is available for all who need it. We must act now before it is too late."

Conference to Address the Crisis

The release of this survey coincides with NHI's upcoming Annual Conference on 19th September. The event will bring together healthcare professionals, policymakers, and key stakeholders to discuss the future of nursing home care in Ireland and explore strategies to address the pressing challenges facing the sector.

ENDS

Editor Notes:

- Coyne Research conducted an online omnibus survey with a national representative sample of 1,000 people. Fieldwork was conducted between 15th–22nd August 2024.
- Of the 6 in 10 (57%) concerned, 26% are extremely concerned, and 31% are very concerned.
- Baby Boomers, Females, and Gen X were more likely to be very/extremely concerned that they or a family member would not be able to receive nursing home care in their local community, if required.
- Nearly 4 in 5 agreed that Nursing Home Care should receive additional Fair Deal funding to provide staff with pay and conditions similar to those in public nursing homes.

- 47% of respondents strongly disagree (15%) or disagree (32%) that nursing home care is adequately funded by the Government.

About Nursing Homes Ireland

Nursing Homes Ireland is the voice of nursing home residents and NHI members. As the national representative organisation and leading voice, we pledge to uphold our position as active advocates, embracing the direct voice of residents, championing a care-first philosophy, and responding to the evolving needs and challenges of our members.

For more information or to arrange an interview with Tadhg Daly, CEO of Nursing Homes Ireland, please contact Kevin Deegan, NHI Policy and Communications Lead, at communications@nhi.ie or 087 236 3039.