

Placing Human Rights at the Heart of Nursing Home Care in Ireland

nhi



What is a Human-Rights Based Approach?

A Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) ensures that every resident is treated with dignity, respect, and equality - empowering individuals and equipping care providers to meet requirements.

Core Principles (FREDA)

- ✓ **Fairness**
Everyone is treated fairly and has the right to be involved in decisions
- ✓ **Respect**
Everyone is treated with respect and cared for as an individual
- ✓ **Equality**
Everyone is an equal person regardless of their background or ability
- ✓ **Dignity**
Everyone is valued and their privacy is protected
- ✓ **Autonomy**
Residents have the right to be involved in decisions about their care



What are the requirements?





- Irish Constitution (1937)
- European Convention on Human Rights
- Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015
- Equal Status Acts (2000–2015)
- Health Act 2007
- National Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland - Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)

New guidance information and tools are available to support nursing homes to develop a HRBA:

"Placing human rights at the heart of nursing home care in Ireland". Guidance information developed by RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences for Nursing Homes Ireland by Morrow, E., Spencer, L. H., Carney, M., Yang, S., Lynch, M., 2025.
<https://doi.org/10.25419/rcsi.29828795>

Making use of human rights-based methods and tools

Various methods and tools are available to help nursing homes to support a human rights-based approach. The following table summarises some of the methods that are available for developing knowledge and skills, reviewing practice, and implementing improvements to protect human rights.

	What it is:	Why/when to use it:
 Daily handovers	Short meetings where staff share updates on residents' needs and concerns during shift changes.	To ensure continuity of care and uphold the rights of residents to dignity, safety, and individualised attention.
 Supervision and appraisals	Ongoing one-to-one support sessions and formal evaluations of staff performance.	To develop staff skills, reinforce human rights principles, and address any practice issues early.
 Resident care plan reviews	Regular assessments and updates of each resident's personalised care plan.	To make sure care remains person-centred and responsive to the changing needs of residents.
 Resident and family meetings	Scheduled gatherings where residents and families can express views and hear updates.	To involve residents and families in decision-making, respecting their right to participation and voice.
 Positive risk-taking discussions	Small group discussions to support staff to think critically about their experiences and practice.	To build self-awareness and professional growth, encouraging positive practices that respect and uphold human rights.
 Training and scenario-based learning	Training sessions using case study examples or scenarios to build practical skills and knowledge.	To empower staff with the tools to respond appropriately and uphold the rights of residents in day-to-day practice.
 Schwartz Rounds	Structured meetings where staff discuss the emotional and social aspects of their work.	To support staff well-being and empathy, strengthening a caring, rights-respecting culture in nursing homes.
 Team debriefs	Group discussions after significant events to reflect on what happened and what could improve.	To promote learning, accountability, and a safer, rights-focused environment for residents.
 Quality improvement audits	Systematic checks of how well services meet care standards and policies.	To identify gaps, ensure compliance, and drive improvements that protect the rights of residents.
 HIQA reports and self-assessments	External inspections and internal reviews focused on standards and quality of care.	To measure how well human rights standards are being met and guide improvements.