

PRESS RELEASE - Thursday, 5th June 2025

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is appalled by the neglect, abuse, and blatant disregard for dignity shown to nursing home residents in the RTÉ Investigates programme.

Leading dementia charity calls for a human rights-based approach to care and highlights importance of dementia-specific training and education

5th June 2025: The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is appalled by the neglect, abuse, and blatant disregard for dignity shown to nursing home residents revealed in *RTÉ Investigates: Inside Ireland's Nursing Homes*, which aired last night.

The programme **revealed neglect** at two private nursing homes – The Residence Portlaoise and Beneavin Manor in Glasnevin in north Dublin – including vulnerable residents left unattended, unsafe manual handling, staff shortages, and lack of essential supplies.

While there were examples of good care – there were many examples of very poor care and practice in the footage. Some of the footage revealed neglect and some residents were clearly suffering, and in particular people living with dementia. The lack of **understanding, compassion** and **empathy** towards people living with dementia was extremely distressing to watch.

Nursing home residents, including those with dementia, must feel **valued, empowered, and supported** to live normal lives. From the RTÉ Investigates footage, we saw instances of care plans not being in place and residents being **denied the opportunity** to take part in activities such as going for a walk. There were examples of control and a lack of regard to person-centred care and the dignity of some of the residents in the care homes. This is clearly unacceptable.

There is an urgent need for a **human rights-based approach** to care and the need for all stakeholders to be trained and aware of rights-based approaches. In addition, **dementia-specific training and education** is key to creating a dementia-inclusive environment designed to enhance quality of life for residents in nursing homes.

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland CEO, Andy Heffernan said: “Nursing homes should provide high-quality care and a homely environment, and we are aware of, and see excellent practices in many nursing homes, however the footage from the RTÉ Investigates Programme showed serious failings in care for some of the residents of the two nursing homes involved. Indeed, a

clear lack of understanding, compassion and empathy towards people living with dementia in the footage was distressing to watch.

“There were instances of the nursing homes being short-staffed and staff not having adequate equipment to do their jobs. However, the programme also revealed a deeply worrying systemic attitude towards older people and people living with dementia. Quality care depends on staffing levels and the right mix of skills, training, and experience, especially for dementia care.

“A human rights-based approach to care is urgently needed and dementia-specific training and education is key to creating a dementia-inclusive environment. Nursing homes are home to many people with dementia who should be supported to enjoy quality of life, maintain relationships, and contribute to society. While most nursing homes provide good care across the country, incidents of poor practice undermine public trust.”

Chair of the Irish Dementia Working Group, Kevin Quaid said: *“I am appalled by the neglect, disregard for dignity – and in some cases, the abuse – shown to nursing home residents in the RTÉ Investigates programme last night. It was deeply distressing to view some of the footage – particularly of the people who are living with dementia. They were clearly suffering, and I was deeply disappointed by the lack of care, empathy and respect shown to the residents in these cases.*

“During the Covid-19 pandemic, members of the Irish Dementia Working Group commissioned a briefing paper called ‘Adult Safeguarding and People with Dementia in Nursing Homes’, which was written by Dr Sarah Donnelly, because we were so concerned about what we were hearing about the experiences of some residents and families in nursing homes. The recommendations of this briefing paper have never been more relevant today.

“It’s high time now that nursing home residents have their human rights upheld – they deserve fairness, respect, equality, dignity, and autonomy. My thoughts today are with the residents and the families of the nursing homes involved and I make a call today for the progression of much-needed safeguarding legislation to help support and protect people living in nursing homes across the country. From my own perspective, my fear of perhaps eventually having to enter residential care at some stage in the future has now been heightened.”

The ASI is now also drawing attention to **‘Adult Safeguarding and People with Dementia in Nursing Homes’** briefing paper, which was written by **Dr Sarah Donnelly**, Assistant Professor of Social Work, School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, UCD.

This paper was commissioned by the **Irish Dementia Working Group (IDWG)**, which is supported by The ASI, and was published in December 2022.

The paper states that nursing home residents' human rights must be upheld through the **FREDA principles**: Fairness, Respect, Equality, Dignity, and Autonomy.

The Briefing Paper is available on The ASI website [here](#)

Assistant Professor of Social Work, School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, UCD, Dr Sarah Donnelly said: *“The State must protect the lives and well-being of the most vulnerable in our society, including people living with dementia in nursing homes. Nursing homes may well be the final ‘home’ of the people who live there, and they should be places where residents feel safe, secure, cared for and protected.*

“The deeply upsetting abuse we witnessed in two private nursing homes exposed by RTÉ Investigates last night provides further evidence of a deeply embedded resistance to institutional change, signalling an urgent need for adult safeguarding procedures to be placed on a statutory basis and fast-tracked as a matter of political priority.

“In addition, as recommended by the Irish Dementia Working Group, people living with dementia should be cared for in a nursing home with staffing levels that align with the dependency levels as outlined in each Common Summary Assessment Form (CSAR) or Care Plan. There should also be consistency in the carers who are providing day-to-day care, and this should be routinely monitored by HIQA inspections.”

Summarised recommendations:

People living with dementia (PLWD) in nursing homes must:

- Receive care aligned with their assessed needs, with consistent staffing levels and continuity of carers, monitored by HIQA.
- Be supported by staff with at least FETAC Level 5 qualifications, trained in dementia care, human rights, and effective communication.
- Live in dementia-friendly environments designed to enhance quality of life, with compliance regularly assessed by HIQA.
- Have their human rights upheld through adherence to the FREDA principles, with clear monitoring by HIQA.
- Be treated with dignity and respect, involved in all key care decisions, and supported in understanding and asserting their rights.
- Receive the highest standard of care and protection, with HIQA actively identifying and addressing poor or abusive practices.

ENDS.

For more information or to arrange a media interview, contact The ASI Communications & Relationship Manager, Jocelyn Grant (085) 856 7143 or email communications@alzheimer.ie

Notes to the Editor:

About The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (The ASI):

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is Ireland's leading dementia-specific service provider. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland works across the country in the heart of local communities providing dementia-specific services and supports and advocating for the rights and needs of all people living with dementia and their carers. Our vision is an Ireland where people on the journey of dementia are valued and supported. A national non-profit organisation, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland advocates, empowers and champions the rights of people living with dementia and their communities to quality support and services.

Alzheimer National Helpline:

For more information on our supports and services during this challenging time, please contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland National Helpline. The Helpline is open six days a week, Monday to Friday, 10 am – 5 pm and Saturday, 10 am – 4 pm, on 1800 341 341. Email at helpline@alzheimer.ie or via Live Chat at www.alzheimer.ie

About Dementia:

- There are 64,000 people with dementia in Ireland, and the number of people with the condition will double in the next 25 years to over 150,000 by 2045. *
- There are 11,000 new cases of dementia in Ireland each year. That's at least 30 people every day, and anyone can get dementia - even people in their 30s/40s/50s.**
- Dementia is an umbrella term used to describe a range of conditions which cause changes and damage to the brain.
- Dementia is progressive. There is currently no cure. Dementia is not simply a health issue but a social issue that requires a community response.
- Most people with dementia (63%) live at home in the community. Over 180,000 people in Ireland are currently or have been carers for a family member or partner with dementia, with many more providing support and care in other ways.
- 1 in 10 people diagnosed with dementia in Ireland is under 65.