

Press Release Thursday 1st July 2010

**Two Thirds Of Private & Voluntary Nursing Home Operators
Concerned at Inconsistent Interpretation and Application of the National Quality
Standards & Regulations**

Independent Appeals Process Sought By Nursing Home Operators

85% Of Operators Warn Repetitive Form Filling Limiting Staff Time With Residents

The inconsistent application of the National Standards and Regulations for nursing homes by HIQA through its inspection regime was highlighted as an area of concern in a report by Prospectus. The report was commissioned by Nursing Homes Ireland (NHI). The objective of this report is to help improve further the HIQA inspection regime that is now one year old having commenced on 1st July 2009.

The report, titled “High-level Review of the HIQA Inspection Process for Residential Care Settings for Older People”, examined a sample of 40 published inspection reports, completed since July 1st 2009, a questionnaire available to all private and voluntary nursing homes in Ireland and completed by 133 respondents, a third of all operators. The report also reviewed practice in other comparative jurisdictions as a means to inform the development of recommendations to advance the continuous improvement of the inspection process. The report includes 29 specific recommendations.

In general, the report highlights that despite some specific concerns in relation to components of the inspection process, the consensus amongst respondents is that it offers a more comprehensive and balanced framework to assess compliance and ultimately raise the quality of service provided.

The findings do however highlight that 67% of those surveyed do not think the Regulations are interpreted and applied consistently with 64% of respondents having the same concern in relation to the National Standards.

“This lack of consistency deduced from the survey is a significant challenge for HIQA and is one that requires close attention to ensure the necessary confidence in this new system” stated Tadhg Daly, CEO, NHI.

“NHI fully supports the inspection regime and was integrally involved as a key stakeholder in the development of the national quality standards,” explained Daly.

“Nursing Homes Ireland wishes to utilise this report to highlight areas where unintended features and/or consequences of the inspection process have emerged or are currently being fostered. Through the identification of these, it is the objective of Nursing Homes Ireland to support the overall improvement of the inspection process. Nursing Homes Ireland is committed to working with HIQA where appropriate for the ultimate benefit of residents in nursing home care across Ireland,” added Daly.

/...

Of the 29 recommendations outlined, one of the most significant and widely supported among those surveyed is the need for a mechanism to facilitate an independent appeals process.

Tadhg Daly added “Two fundamental principles of natural and constitutional justice are that no person should be a judge in his own cause, and that a decision maker must hear the other side in a dispute or argument. NHI contends that these principals should be considered as the basis for an independent appeals process.”

Respondents to the questionnaire also requested that the administrative requirements of the registration and inspection process be reviewed with 85% of responses highlighting their dissatisfaction.

“They understand the need for written records and are happy to provide them, but are frustrated with the level of duplication in particular. This means less staff time is available to be spent with the residents. We believe that a simple review of the forms to be filled together with a review of the information being captured can solve this problem,” stated Daly. “Otherwise we may find smaller operators, being forced to close, as happened in the UK following the introduction of their inspection regime.”

Much of the feedback and the content of the report is positive about the regime with nursing home operators calling for specific changes regarding the introduction of clear and unambiguous timelines of scheduling, the opportunity to waive waiting periods in order to speed up the process and the possession of an enhanced level of medical and specific care of the older person expertise across the HIQA inspection team.

NHI has in the last number of days met with both HIQA and Dept of Health and Children to present the report and the recommendations.

“NHI as an organisation, has been, and will continue to be a force to facilitate constantly improving standards in the care we provide for our older citizens” concluded Daly

ENDS

For further information please contact:

Ger Kenny 087 2488393

Link to report www.nhi.ie