BDO | Nursing Homes Ireland

Private and Voluntary Nursing Homes

Biannual Pulse Survey Report June 2026

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Introduction

BDO, Nursing Homes Ireland Biannual Pulse Survey Report June 2026

We are delighted to present our third BDO | Nursing Homes Ireland Private and Voluntary Nursing Home Pulse Survey Report.

We know this is a highly valued publication for the many and varied stakeholders of the nursing home sector. This is becoming increasingly relevant given Ireland's ageing demographic profile and the resulting growth in demand for long-term care, which is challenged by staffing shortages and inflationary pressures across the sector.

This pulse survey was undertaken in May 2026, with findings pertaining to the latest 6-month reporting period of participating Homes (November 2025 – April 2026), in addition to operational statistics as at May 2026. The survey results reveal critical areas requiring strategic action to protect the long-term sustainability of this vital sector, for which demand is continually increasing.

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We thank all participants for their valuable feedback, which is crucial for providing evidence-based insights to sector stakeholders and driving informed, targeted improvements.

Foreword

Stephen O'Flaherty, Corporate Finance Partner and Head of Healthcare, BDO

Securing the future of Long-Term Care: Urgent Action Required

We are pleased to present our third Private and Voluntary Nursing Homes Pulse Survey Report. Ongoing capacity and workforce pressures, rising costs, and misaligned State funding and policy are putting Ireland's ability to meet the long-term residential care needs of its ageing population at risk, highlighting the need for urgent strategic reform.

This Report highlights that nursing homes are operating with very limited headroom. Average occupancy stands at 94.9%, with some regions even higher, leaving little flexibility to respond to changing demand or resident needs.

Capacity is tightening further, with 116 registered beds lost over the past year. While some expansion is planned by survey respondents, this will not satisfy demand, with the ESRI estimating that Ireland will require an additional 1,039 beds annually to 2040.

The Fair Deal Scheme remains the primary funding source, covering 82% of residents, however respondents highlight that Fair Deal rates are not keeping pace with rising inflation and energy costs.

Care needs are also intensifying. An older, more acute resident profile is driving higher care hours and increasing demand for experienced staff.

However, workforce constraints persist, with rising labour costs adding further pressure. Access to labour is also becoming more constrained as more operators approach non-EEA staffing limits.

Staff costs now average 60.9% of revenue, with shortages driving greater reliance on agency staffing. Pay pressures are expected to continue due to further MAR adjustments and anticipated minimum wage increases.

Targeted strategic policy and remuneration initiatives are urgently needed to promote and make 'new build' bed stock economically viable thereby alleviating now mounting capacity concerns and to ensure existing operators are financially supported to continue investing in existing homes.

Ireland's ageing population presents one of the most significant challenges facing our health and social care system. Failure to implement targeted strategic reforms that sustain existing nursing home capacity and facilitate the delivery of new capacity will place at risk our ability to ensure older people receive the care, dignity and support they deserve at the most vulnerable stage of their lives. While new capacity will take time to deliver, decisive action today can mitigate current risks and support a more sustainable, balanced care system for the future.

Finally, we would like to thank Nursing Homes Ireland for commissioning this survey, Bank of Ireland for supporting its publication and all participants for their valuable input. We hope this report supports evidence-based insights and acts as a catalyst for informed decisions and action in the sector.

Nursing Homes Ireland

TADHG DALY
CEO, Nursing Homes Ireland

We are pleased to present the June 2026 edition of the Nursing Homes Ireland and BDO Private and Voluntary Nursing Home Biannual Pulse Survey. This report provides an important snapshot of the operational pressures and emerging trends facing independent nursing home care across Ireland at the mid-point of this year.

The findings point to continued high occupancy rates, increasing care complexity, and persistent challenges in staffing and recruitment, all of which place significant strain on care providers' ability to meet our populations growing needs. Financial pressures also remain a key concern across the sector, with rising input costs and constrained funding impacting sustainability. The information and trends reported here will support Members in benchmarking their own homes and informing local planning, as well as identifying areas for development and improvement - as we prepare to care for (and celebrate) an ageing and more diverse population.

I want to thank all Nursing Homes Ireland (NHI) Members who took the time to participate in this survey. Their invaluable contribution ensures NHIs solution focused advocacy remains grounded in accurate and timely evidence. NHI will use the insights reported in this Biannual Pulse Survey to continue to press for the reforms, investment, and support required to ensure high-quality, person-centred, and choice-led care for residents now and into the future.

Bank of Ireland

GRAINNE MAHON HENSON
Head of Healthcare, Bank of Ireland

Bank of Ireland is pleased to support the latest Nursing Homes Ireland and BDO Private and Voluntary Nursing Homes Pulse Survey.

Few sectors will be as critical to the future of Ireland's healthcare system as residential care for older people. This survey provides a timely and valuable snapshot of providers' opportunities and challenges, with key insights for shaping the future of care in Ireland.

Occupancy remains exceptionally strong, averaging 94.9%, reflecting essential demand driven by Ireland's ageing population. However, the survey also highlights persistent pressures, including workforce sustainability, increasing care requirements, rising operating costs, and the need for continued investment in facilities and infrastructure.

Many of the themes highlighted in this report are reflective of the ongoing conversations I have had with nursing home providers nationwide: recruitment and retention challenges, intensifying care needs, evolving regulatory requirements, and the challenge of planning for future demand. With staff costs now representing over 60% of revenue on average, providers are navigating an increasingly complex environment while preparing for a future where demand for high-quality residential care will continue to significantly grow.

With over 30 years of experience in health service management across public and private sectors, I have seen first-hand that care is fundamentally about people. Behind every occupancy rate, staffing metric, and funding decision are residents, families, and dedicated care teams. Supporting those who deliver care must remain a priority to ensure consistently high standards for future generations.

The report also highlights the investment challenges facing many providers, alongside a clear widening gap between projected demand and planned capacity. While respondents indicate modest increases in bed numbers, these fall materially short of what will be required. As accommodation standards and resident experience evolve, operators are increasingly required to modernise facilities. Unlike the public system, which benefits from dedicated capital funding programmes, private and voluntary nursing home providers must largely fund investment from operational income. Supporting modernisation will help smaller, community-rooted nursing homes to remain viable. Thus, there is a clear opportunity to consider targeted supports or incentives to enable established providers to expand capacity and meet future demand.

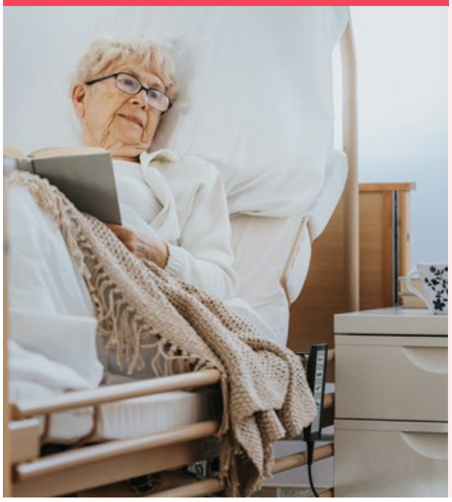
I thank Nursing Homes Ireland, BDO, and all participating providers for their contribution to this important work. These insights will help inform decisions and support the development of a sustainable, high-quality residential care sector in the years ahead.

Survey Findings

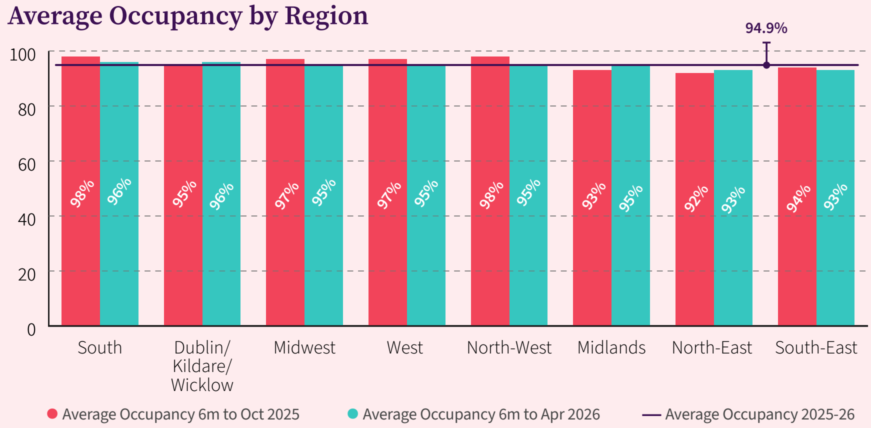
Occupancy

94.9%

On average over the last 6 months, unchanged compared to our November 2025 pulse survey result.[1]



Average Occupancy by Region



The 'Average' represents a simple average calculated using the responses from all respondents.

BDO has independently reviewed Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) reports published over the last 6 months (November 2025 to April 2026) which indicate an average inspection day occupancy rate of 94.4% (excluding outliers).

The strong occupancy levels are consistent with the limited and contracting nursing home bed capacity, with total bed stock decreasing by 116 beds over the last 12 months (comparing the HIQA bed register for June 2026 vs June 2025).

Resident Funding Profile

On average

82%

of residents in respondents' Homes were funded through the Fair Deal Scheme.

€663

weekly rate differential between Private/Voluntary vs Public.

Profile

Category:	Fair Deal	Private	Other
% Residents (May 2026 pulse survey result)	82%	10%	8%
% Residents (May 2025 pulse survey result)	84%	12%	4%

Overall, consistent with our July 2025 survey report[2], the Fair Deal Scheme continues to remain as the primary source of funding for residents.

Resident profiles vary by sample and individual Homes due to individual admission pathways, funding eligibility, and local demand patterns, which collectively influence the overall care mix within each Home.

Separately, it is noted that material differences between public and private Fair Deal Rates (FDR) continue to prevail.

The national average private and voluntary weekly FDR as at May 2026 was reported at €1,299 which is €663 below the average national public rate of €1,962 (last published in January 2026); a differential which is consistent to that reported in our July 2025 survey report.

The level of private FDRs continue to impact nursing homes, with a majority of survey respondents citing inadequate funding under the Nursing Home Support Scheme (NHSS) i.e. Fair Deal Scheme as a key challenge.

[1] BDO/Nursing Homes Ireland *'Private and Voluntary Nursing Homes Biannual Pulse Survey Report December 2025'*; Available here.
[2] BDO/Nursing Homes Ireland *'Private and Voluntary Nursing Homes Biannual Pulse Survey Report July 2025'*; Available here.

Survey Findings

Care Hours

On average
3.85
care hours were provided per resident per day.

Care Hours per Resident per Day (CHPRPD)

Survey respondents were found on average to provide 3.85 care hours per day to each resident accommodated in their respective nursing homes. This represents an increase of c. 3% since our last survey in November 2025 which reported an average of 3.73 CHPRPD.

Care hours continue to vary by Home, driven by individual care assessments along with Home specific circumstances.

Staff Costs

Average over last 6 months at
60.9%
of revenue.

Staff Costs % of Revenue

Reported staff costs as a percentage of revenue is consistent with the average reported in our May 2025 survey, at c. 61% of revenue.

Agency Staff

On average
5.1%
of total staff members.

Respondents reported that on average c. 5.1% of the Homes' staff are agency staff while c. 17% of the Homes reported agency levels above 10% of the staffing cohort.

The utilisation of agency staff is likely a result of continuing staff retention and recruitment challenges faced by nursing homes.

Survey Findings

Entry Level Hourly Pay Rate

€19.50
hour for entry level nurses.

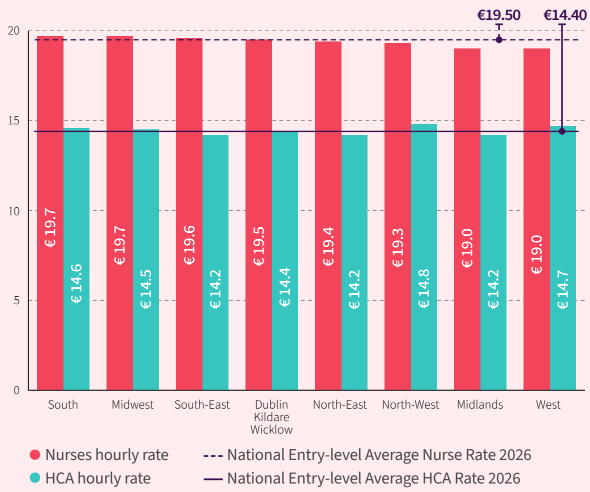
€14.40
hour for entry level Health Care Assistants (HCAs).

The average entry level pay rate for nurses is reported at €19.50 in May 2026, largely consistent with the rates reported in the May 2025 survey result. HCA rates are reported at an average of €14.40 which reflects a 4.3% increase to the entry level pay for HCAs reported in the May 2025 survey result. This increase is likely driven by minimum wage increase of 4.8% in 2026 reaching €14.15 per hour.

The above averages exclude staff on permits, who are subject to minimum annual remuneration (MAR)[3] requirements, implying hourly rates of c. €20.2 and €16.1 per hour for nurses and HCAs respectively. We note that the applicable MARs have increased to €40,904 for nurses (7.6% above 2025 levels) and €32,691 for HCAs (9.0%) from March 2026.

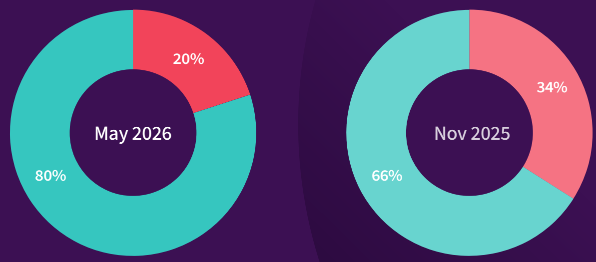
The national minimum wage is a benchmark against which many other wage rates are measured. Any increase in the national minimum wage has a domino effect on employers to raise hourly rates across the spectrum. We note recommendations to the Low Pay Commission to increase the national minimum wage in 2027 to 60% of the median wage.

Average Entry-level Pay Rate by Region



Staff Composition

Proportion of nursing homes in which Non-EEA staff account for
- More than 40% of total staff
- Less than or equal to 40% of total staff



The figures shown above highlight the composition of the workforce across participating Homes from our November 2025 pulse survey (Nov 2025) and the current pulse survey (May 2026). Based on the results, it is evident that the utilisation of non-EEA staff has increased over the period.

All sectors are currently limited by the 50/50 staffing rule, which requires that at least 50% of employees of an employer must be EEA nationals when applying for employment permits. Accordingly, consistent with our previous survey, and following intensive lobbying by NHI, the Government has announced plans to review the 50/50 rule focused on the health and social care sector where workforce shortages continue to impact care continuity.

In support of the review, the Government notes that[4]

> *"With Ireland's ageing population sharply increasing while the domestic labour supply is not keeping pace, critical sectors such as those providing healthcare services to the elderly and vulnerable members of our society are experiencing enduring worker shortages and unmet demand."*

Accordingly it is expected that any future amendments are expected to provide greater flexibility for nursing home providers.

[3] Minimum Annual Remuneration for non-EEA staff; Available here.
[4] Ministers Burke and Dillon announce new employment permits to support homes, health and transport; Available here.

Planned Net Increase in Registered Bed Capacity

1.9% or **c.605 beds**

increase in Homes' bed capacity in next 12-24 months.

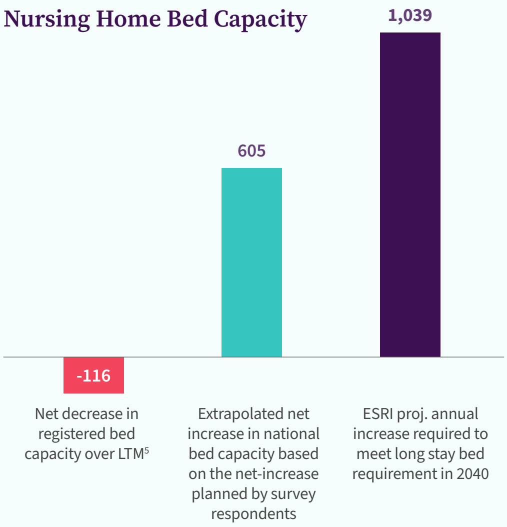
Survey respondents reported a mix of planned bed increases and reductions over the next 12–24 months, spread across a number of regions.

It is noted that Ireland's registered bed capacity has decreased over the last 12 months (LTM) by 116 beds (a 0.4% reduction).* However, survey respondents reported planned increases equivalent to approximately 1.9% of their current registered bed capacity. When extrapolated and applied to national registered bed capacity as of June 2026, this suggests an indicative planned net increase of around 605 beds across Ireland.[5]

This indicative net increase based on survey respondents' data is materially low compared to the ESRI's lowest projected (progress scenario) annual increase in long stay bed requirement[6] of c. 1,039 beds in order to meet demand requirements from 2022 through to 2040.

*The decrease in registered bed capacity was primarily due to the cancellation, closure or transfer of registrations across 9 Homes and a net decrease in bed numbers across 44 Homes, together accounting for a decrease of 564 beds. This was partially offset by the registration of 10 Homes adding 448 beds.

Nursing Home Bed Capacity



While the indicated net increase in beds from survey respondents is positive for the sector, it should be understood that these findings are limited to the survey respondents and may not be representative of the wider industry.

In addition, planned capacity expansions are subject to change and may be delayed, scaled back, or deferred and might not have planning and regulatory approvals yet. In particular, planning permission and HIQA registration[7,8] alone could take c. 12 months, in addition to build time.

Energy Costs

7.8%

average increase in the Homes' energy bills in the past 12 months (May 2025 - April 2026).

The above is an average reported across all nursing home survey respondents while noting that 24% of the respondents reported a reduction in energy bills (likely attributable to contract timing effects); excluding these cases, the average increase among the remaining 76% was c. 13.4%.

[5] HIQA Bed register; Available here.
[6] Based off the progress scenario, ESRI *'Projections of regional demand and bed capacity requirements for older people's care in Ireland'*; Available here.
[7] Planning permission timeline, example; Available here.
[8] HIQA *'Registration handbook: Guidance on making applications'*; Available here.

Survey Findings

Survey Respondents – Current Challenges

Staffing

- Staff-related issues persist as one of the most significant challenges facing the sector. Leading concerns reported relate to staff retention as well as recruitment related challenges, which was cited as a significant challenge by 52% of the respondents. This included specific references to work permit issues and increase in MARs, increasing labour costs relative to funding, and staff going to the HSE.

Capex and operational issues

- Capex and other operations related issues were flagged as a significant issue by 40% of survey respondents. Respondents referenced required facility improvements as a major challenge to operations including twin room limitations / lack of ensuite facilities, in-house call bell system and internet issues as well as the age of building.
- It is understood that the 2026 Health Budget included €10m for a Resident Environment Enhancement (REE) initiative, reinforcing Government focus on the enhancement of residents' environment and daily living experience. Through this scheme up to €25,000 is available to each qualifying nursing home for eligible works carried out between 1 January to 20 November 2026, and also for works previously undertaken during 2025, between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025, that meet the scheme criteria.

Funding and inflation

- The Fair Deal scheme remains as the dominant funding source – per survey responses 82% of residents are supported under the Fair Deal scheme, with Homes having limited access to alternative sources of income. Inadequate remuneration from the NTPF combined with rising costs was cited as a key challenge by 32% of the respondents.
- Overall, Ireland is facing higher than anticipated inflationary pressures following the developments in the Middle East. In its latest Quarterly Bulletin[9] (June 2026), the Central Bank of Ireland (CBI) revised its 2026 inflation forecast to 3.5%, up from the previous estimate of 2.9%. The CBI highlighted that Irish economic policy faces a dual challenge, supporting those most vulnerable and enabling households and firms to build resilience to these shocks, while avoiding measures that unnecessarily add to demand or entrench inflationary pressures. In this context, appropriate Government support and commensurate uplifts in remuneration are likely to be required to help nursing home providers withstand these inflationary pressures.

[9] Domestic resilience even as inflation rises, but effects of the Middle East conflict hang over the outlook: Quarterly Bulletin 2026:2; Available here.

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