

## **10 Key Issues Affecting Older Peoples Services in Ireland**

### **1. Rising Demand Due to Ageing Population**

Ireland's population is ageing rapidly, leading to increased demand for health and social care services for older people, including more complex and long-term care needs<sup>[6][7]</sup>.

### **2. Shortages in Care Workforce**

There are significant staffing shortages across the sector, affecting both home care and nursing home services. Low pay and limited career prospects for care workers exacerbate recruitment and retention challenges<sup>[6][7]</sup>.

### **3. Inadequate Funding and Sustainability Concerns**

Many providers face rising running costs and financial uncertainty. The sustainability of nursing homes, in particular, is at risk due to insufficient funding and delays in reviewing the Nursing Home Support Scheme (Fair Deal)<sup>[8][9]</sup>.

### **4. Limited Access and Long Waiting Lists**

Older people often face long waiting lists for home care packages and community-based supports, resulting in delayed discharges from hospitals and unmet care needs<sup>[10][7]</sup>.

### **5. Policy Gaps and Lack of Strategic Planning**

There is a lack of clear policy vision and strategic planning for long-term residential care. Key commitments, such as a policy paper on the future of nursing home care, have stalled or disappeared from government plans<sup>[8]</sup>.

### **6. Overreliance on Unpaid Carers and Inadequate Carer Support**

Unpaid family carers are overextended, filling gaps left by formal services. Supports for carers, such as grants and respite, are seen as insufficient<sup>[11][7]</sup>.

### **7. Social Isolation and Loneliness**

Loneliness and social exclusion are persistent issues among older people, often highlighted in individual needs assessments and community service reports<sup>[11]</sup>.

### **8. Fragmented and Inconsistent Service Provision**

There is a need for better integration of services across home care, community supports, independent living, and nursing homes to provide a seamless continuum of care<sup>[9][12]</sup>.

## 9. Lack of Suitable Housing and Adaptation Supports

Many older people require housing adaptations or independent living units to remain at home, but access to grants and suitable options is limited<sup>[9]</sup>.

## 10. Slow Progress on Home Care Reform and Statutory Entitlements

While there are plans to introduce a statutory home care scheme and increase home care hours, progress has been slow, and access remains uneven across regions<sup>[12]</sup>.

These issues highlight the urgent need for comprehensive planning, increased investment, and policy reform to ensure older people in Ireland receive the care and support they need<sup>[8][11][7]</sup>.

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