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## **Increasing funds for Home Care is a "no brainer" says Expert**

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According to HSE figures released this week, keeping someone in a long-stay bed or nursing home for one week costs from around EUR1200 to EUR2500 per week.

“Providing 15 hours of home care, which is the amount our average client requires, costs closer to EUR313 per week, and that’s before tax relief at the higher rate”, he claims.

“What’s more, only about 5% of Ireland’s senior population will be affected by the new ‘Fair Deal’ scheme as that is the percentage who go into a nursing home. That leaves the vast majority of our seniors needing alternative arrangements to be put in place”.

The National Economic chr(38) Social Forum report launched during the week highlighted the positive impact of home care packages on older peoples lives as they endeavour to remain independent in their own homes.

Murphy argues the benefits of adopting a comprehensive National Home Care Plan will be far reaching and warns that such a move must be made now as an ‘Age Wave’ is about to hit Ireland.

“All the baby boomers, the people born in the years following World War II, are about to enter their 60s, 70s and 80s. As they do so they will put increasing strains on health facilities, social programmes and their own families. Who is going to provide the care they need?”, he asks.

“By freeing up badly needed beds in hospitals and nursing homes the entire community benefits. The hospital waiting lists will be reduced. The medical staff will be able to do the jobs they are paid to do, not spend their time on non-medical care giving duties. Staying at home tends to benefit the overall health of a senior which will reduce the demand for costly medications. Family members, usually women, will not have to give up their paid employment and claim caregivers allowance to look after their senior loved one. In addition, more professional caregiver jobs will be created in every county across Ireland which will add to the exchequer.

“On a more personal level, the senior maintains a level of independence, security and confidence. They may even be reducing their risk of depression and dementia because by caring for themselves they must keep more physically active. For seniors in the early stages of dementia, being in familiar surroundings often reduces emotional stress”.

Murphy continues, “By facilitating Irish senior citizens to continue living at home as they age, elderly people will not have to worry about their children being required to sell the family home in order to pay a large sum from their estate to cover their ‘Fair Deal’ obligations after they die.

“It is also interesting to note that according to research published in the Irish Medical Journal in 2008, older patients discharged from hospital to long-term care in nursing homes have survival rates half that of those who live in the community. So when you look at the multiple benefits of putting an effective home care policy into place it really is a no brainer, on every level”, he says.

It is estimated about 28% of seniors currently residing in medical institutions could live independently in their own homes if they were to receive some home help.

# Irish Press Releases

Research undertaken last year by Home Instead on the state of care giving in Ireland found that:

- Almost 90% of seniors stressed the importance of living in their own homes.
- The most frequent forms of assistance required by those aged over 75 are in relation to housework, meal preparation and companionship, followed by grooming and dressing, bathing and shopping.
- Arthritis (38%) is the most common health problem afflicting seniors currently requiring home care. This is followed by orthopaedic problems (21%), loneliness/isolation (20%) and depression (19%).
- Relatives (64%) are the primary source of care for Irish seniors, with Government services coming in second at 41%.

The shift in Ireland's demographic profile - by the year 2025 the CSO estimates there will be 812,000 persons aged 65, an increase of 218% over the 2004 figure - is going to have a huge impact on the medical community, on Government programmes, on work and retirement patterns and on budgets. "Developing a comprehensive national Senior Care Policy which meets the needs of all seniors, not tiny minority, is imperative," says Murphy.

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Download a high resolution image of Ed Murphy from the "Resources chr(38) Images" section of [www.projectpr.ie](http://www.projectpr.ie).

Ed Murphy is available for comment on 01 - 2973490 or 087 2306230.