



**Health
Information
and Quality
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Report of a Restrictive Practice Thematic Inspection of a Designated Centre for Older People.

Issued by the Chief Inspector

Name of designated centre:	Acorn Lodge
Name of provider:	Acorn Healthcare Limited
Address of centre:	Ballykelly, Cashel, Tipperary
Type of inspection:	Unannounced
Date of inspection:	27 March 2025
Centre ID:	OSV-0000188
Fieldwork ID:	MON-0045971

What is a thematic inspection?

The purpose of a thematic inspection is to drive quality improvement. Service providers are expected to use any learning from thematic inspection reports to drive continuous quality improvement which will ultimately be of benefit to the people living in designated centres.

Thematic inspections assess compliance against the National Standards **for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland**. See Appendix 1 for a list of the relevant standards for this thematic programme.

There may be occasions during the course of a thematic inspection where inspectors form the view that the service is not in compliance with the regulations pertaining to restrictive practices. In such circumstances, the thematic inspection against the National Standards will cease and the inspector will proceed to a risk-based inspection against the appropriate regulations.

What is 'restrictive practice'?

Restrictive practices are defined in the *Health Act 2007 (Care and Welfare of Residents in Designated Centres for Older People) Regulations 2013* as **'the intentional restriction of a person's voluntary movement or behaviour'**.

Restrictive practices may be physical or environmental¹ in nature. They may also look to limit a person's choices or preferences (for example, access to cigarettes or certain foods), sometimes referred to as 'rights restraints'. A person can also experience restrictions through inaction. This means that the care and support a person requires to partake in normal daily activities are not being met within a reasonable timeframe. This thematic inspection is focussed on how service providers govern and manage the use of restrictive practices to ensure that people's rights are upheld, in so far as possible.

Physical restraint commonly involves any manual or physical method of restricting a person's movement. For example, physically holding the person back or holding them by the arm to prevent movement. **Environmental** restraint is the restriction of a person's access to their surroundings. This can include restricted access to external areas by means of a locked door or door that requires a code. It can also include limiting a person's access to certain activities or preventing them from exercising certain rights such as religious or civil liberties.

¹ Chemical restraint does not form part of this thematic inspection programme.

About this report

This report outlines the findings on the day of inspection. There are three main sections:

- What the inspector observed and residents said on the day of inspection
- Oversight and quality improvement arrangements
- Overall judgment

In forming their overall judgment, inspectors will gather evidence by observing care practices, talking to residents, interviewing staff and management, and reviewing documentation. In doing so, they will take account of the relevant National Standards as laid out in the Appendix to this report.

This unannounced inspection was carried out during the following times:

Date	Times of Inspection	Inspector of Social Services
Thursday 27 March 2025	10:20hrs to 15:55hrs	Mary Veale
Thursday 27 March 2025	10:20hrs to 15:55hrs	Lisa Walsh

What the inspector observed and residents said on the day of inspection

The inspection of Acorn Lodge was unannounced and carried out as part of the thematic inspections, focusing on the use of restrictive practices. Thematic inspections assess compliance against the *National Standards for Residential Care Settings For Older People in Ireland*. From observations made by the inspectors it was evident that respect for residents was promoted and person-centred care approaches were embedded in care practices.

Acorn Lodge is situated near Cashel in Co. Tipperary. The centre is registered for 50 beds. The centre provides long-term care, convalescence care and respite care. On the day of inspection 48 residents were living in the centre. The centre was a purpose built single storey building. The centre was homely, clean and comfortably decorated with many homely features.

The design and layout of the centre did not restrict the residents' movement. The inspectors observed residents in various areas throughout the centre. For example; many residents were walking along the corridors, and others were sitting in the day rooms. The inspectors observed residents in the communal areas throughout the day of the inspection. Residents had a choice of communal spaces, such as a day room, a dining room, a visitor's room, a library, a drawing room and an oratory. The atmosphere was relaxed and calm.

Residents' bedrooms were clean, tidy and had ample personal storage space. Bedrooms were personal to the residents containing family photographs, and personal belongings. The inspectors observed that a number of residents were in their rooms and had their bedroom doors closed.

Residents had access to an enclosed courtyard garden area and a large garden to the front of the building. Doors leading out to the courtyard garden had an alarm on them to alert staff if a resident wanted to go outside, however, doors were observed not locked on the day of inspection. The courtyards had level paving, comfortable seating, tables, and flower beds. The inspectors were informed that residents were encouraged to use the garden spaces.

An electronic locking system was observed in place on the front door into the main reception area. The risk of having the door electronically locked was regularly assessed and reviewed. The inspectors were informed that residents who were able to use the key-code pad could do so if they wished. The inspectors observed that the physical environment allowed for care to be provided in a non-restrictive manner. Residents were seen mobilising independently and with the use of mobility aids around the centre throughout the day.

Residents told the inspectors that they were consulted about their care and about the organisation of the service. Residents said that they felt safe in the centre and that their privacy and dignity was respected. Residents told the inspectors they liked living in the centre and that staff were always respectful and supportive. Residents told the

inspectors that their call-bells were answered promptly and they were content and well looked after in this centre.

Staff were observed providing timely and discreet assistance, thus enabling residents to maintain their independence and dignity. Staff were familiar with residents' individual needs and provided person-centred care, in accordance with individual resident's choices and preferences.

There was adequate supervision of residents with staffing levels on the day of inspection suitable to the assessed needs of the residents. Staff were supported to perform their respective roles with ongoing mandatory and additional training. Staff whom the inspectors spoke with were aware of practices that may be restrictive, for example, low beds, lap belts and bedrails. Staff were very knowledgeable of the individual and person-centred needs of each resident.

Residents were overwhelmingly complimentary of the home-cooked food and the dining experience in the centre. Residents stated that the quality of the food was excellent. Residents told the inspectors that they could have their meals in their bedrooms if they wished. The inspectors observed the dining experience at lunch time. The dining room tables were covered with white cloth tablecloths and had a fine dining room atmosphere. The lunch-time meal was appetising, well presented and the residents were not rushed. Staff were observed to be respectful when offering clothes protectors and discreetly assisted the residents during the meal times. Residents were observed chatting and laughing with staff and fellow residents throughout the meal time experience.

Arrangements were in place for residents to feedback and contribute to the organisation of the service. Residents told the inspectors that the person in charge and staff were available to them and were responsive to their needs and requests. In addition to this informal feedback, there were regular residents' meetings. Residents whom the inspectors spoke with said that their family and friends could attend the centre any at time. Residents were supported to access the SAGE advocacy and the patient advocacy service if required or requested.

Activities provided were varied, interesting and informed by residents' interests, preferences and capabilities. The inspectors observed a group exercise activity in the morning and a mindfulness session taking place in the afternoon on the day of the inspection. Residents told the inspectors that they enjoyed daily group activities such as exercises, and card games. Residents were happy with the choice and frequency of activities. Visitors were observed coming in and out of the centre throughout the day and told the inspectors that they were always welcome and were assured of the care provided.

Oversight and the Quality Improvement arrangements

There was a positive and proactive approach to reducing restrictive practices and promoting a restraint-free environment in this service. The centre had significantly reduced its use of bedrails. There was one bedrail in use on the day of inspection.

The person in charge was on planned leave on the day of the inspection. However, nursing staff were familiar with restrictive practice guidance and had been working with the management team to reduce and eliminate where possible restrictive practices. The centre had completed the self-assessment questionnaire and had developed a targeted improvement plan. Resources were made available for staff training and for equipment such as low to floor beds and falls prevention mats in bedrooms. Staff had undertaken mandatory training in restrictive practice and in dementia awareness training which included the management of complex behaviour. This was a significant investment made by the provider and underlies their overall commitment to reducing restrictive practices.

Overall there were good governance structures in place with ongoing auditing and feedback informing quality and safety improvement in the centre. There was good oversight of safety and risk with active risks around restrictions identified and controls in place to mitigate these risks. There were also appropriate risk assessments for bed rails, responsive behaviours, environmental risks and falls with the least restrictive controls in place. Falls management was good in the centre. All incidents were recorded and investigated. Post falls protocol included immediate and appropriate management of the resident with neurological observations monitored for all unwitnessed falls. Reassessment of the resident's needs following a fall included a full review of their risk for falling again, with their care plan changed accordingly.

Complaints were recorded on the centre's electronic documentation system and were robustly investigated. The complaints procedure was clearly displayed in the centre and both residents and their families were aware of the process. A small number of complaints had been received since the centre had previously been inspected in August 2024. All of these complaints were satisfactorily dealt with. Complaints and incidents were audited and trends identified and learning informed safety improvements in the centre.

The centre had a service specific policy on the management of restrictive practices which was written in plain English and promoted the rights of residents. Consent forms for residents who had a physical restriction were signed by the resident in conjunction with the nursing staff and the resident's family if appropriate. Restrictive devices were discussed at handover and formally reassessed at a minimum of every four months or sooner if indicated. Restrictive practices were audited quarterly and

plans to improve the service included training for all staff in restrictive practices and training in positive training support.

Care plans viewed detailed person-centred interventions and staff were very familiar with residents' needs and social histories. Validated assessment tools were used to risk-assess residents' needs and to ensure that each resident was supported in positive risk-taking through an informed decision, with the information on the rationale and possible risks associated clearly documented. An associate care plan was in place, and the inspectors saw that it detailed specific information on each resident's care needs and what or who was important to them. The care plans described the alternatives tried. Further improvement was required in the practice of documenting the recording of restrictive practice. For example; There was no bedrail review documentation available for the bedrail device while in use. This practice was not in line with the national policy *Towards a Restraint Free Environment in Nursing Homes*.

Overall, the inspectors identified that management and staff in Acorn Lodge were committed to promoting a restraint-free environment for residents. While a small opportunity for improvement was identified during the inspection, it was clear that residents enjoyed a good quality of life to the best of their abilities.

Overall Judgment

The following section describes the overall judgment made by the inspector in respect of how the service performed when assessed against the National Standards.

Substantially Compliant	Residents received a good, safe service but their quality of life would be enhanced by improvements in the management and reduction of restrictive practices.
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The National Standards

This inspection is based on the *National Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland (2016)*. Only those National Standards which are relevant to restrictive practices are included under the respective theme. Under each theme there will be a description of what a good service looks like and what this means for the resident.

The standards are comprised of two dimensions: Capacity and capability; and Quality and safety.

There are four themes under each of the two dimensions. The **Capacity and Capability** dimension includes the following four themes:

- **Leadership, Governance and Management** — the arrangements put in place by a residential service for accountability, decision-making, risk management as well as meeting its strategic, statutory and financial obligations.
- **Use of Resources** — using resources effectively and efficiently to deliver best achievable outcomes for people for the money and resources used.
- **Responsive Workforce** — planning, recruiting, managing and organising staff with the necessary numbers, skills and competencies to respond to the needs and preferences of people in residential services.
- **Use of Information** — actively using information as a resource for planning, delivering, monitoring, managing and improving care.

The **Quality and Safety** dimension includes the following four themes:

- **Person-centred Care and Support** — how residential services place people at the centre of what they do.
- **Effective Services** — how residential services deliver best outcomes and a good quality of life for people, using best available evidence and information.
- **Safe Services** — how residential services protect people and promote their welfare. Safe services also avoid, prevent and minimise harm and learn from things when they go wrong.
- **Health and Wellbeing** — how residential services identify and promote optimum health and wellbeing for people.

List of National Standards used for this thematic inspection:

Capacity and capability

Theme: Leadership, Governance and Management	
5.1	The residential service performs its functions as outlined in relevant legislation, regulations, national policies and standards to protect each resident and promote their welfare.
5.2	The residential service has effective leadership, governance and management arrangements in place and clear lines of accountability.
5.3	The residential service has a publicly available statement of purpose that accurately and clearly describes the services provided.
5.4	The quality of care and experience of residents are monitored, reviewed and improved on an ongoing basis.

Theme: Use of Resources	
6.1	The use of resources is planned and managed to provide person-centred, effective and safe services and supports to residents.

Theme: Responsive Workforce	
7.2	Staff have the required competencies to manage and deliver person-centred, effective and safe services to all residents.
7.3	Staff are supported and supervised to carry out their duties to protect and promote the care and welfare of all residents.
7.4	Training is provided to staff to improve outcomes for all residents.

Theme: Use of Information	
8.1	Information is used to plan and deliver person-centred, safe and effective residential services and supports.

Quality and safety

Theme: Person-centred Care and Support	
1.1	The rights and diversity of each resident are respected and safeguarded.
1.2	The privacy and dignity of each resident are respected.
1.3	Each resident has a right to exercise choice and to have their needs and preferences taken into account in the planning, design and delivery of services.
1.4	Each resident develops and maintains personal relationships and links with the community in accordance with their wishes.
1.5	Each resident has access to information, provided in a format appropriate to their communication needs and preferences.

1.6	Each resident, where appropriate, is facilitated to make informed decisions, has access to an advocate and their consent is obtained in accordance with legislation and current evidence-based guidelines.
1.7	Each resident's complaints and concerns are listened to and acted upon in a timely, supportive and effective manner.

Theme: Effective Services

2.1	Each resident has a care plan, based on an ongoing comprehensive assessment of their needs which is implemented, evaluated and reviewed, reflects their changing needs and outlines the supports required to maximise their quality of life in accordance with their wishes.
2.6	The residential service is homely and accessible and provides adequate physical space to meet each resident's assessed needs.

Theme: Safe Services

3.1	Each resident is safeguarded from abuse and neglect and their safety and welfare is promoted.
3.2	The residential service has effective arrangements in place to manage risk and protect residents from the risk of harm.
3.5	Arrangements to protect residents from harm promote bodily integrity, personal liberty and a restraint-free environment in accordance with national policy.

Theme: Health and Wellbeing

4.3	Each resident experiences care that supports their physical, behavioural and psychological wellbeing.
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