

The West of Ireland



Alzheimer

Foundation

Mayo, Galway, Roscommon

GUIDE TO SERVICES AND SUPPORT

*Home
Support*

Day Care

*Respite and
Long-term
Care*

Help Line

*Education
and
Awareness*





Most carers never forget it – the moment you first hear the word “Alzheimer’s” in reference to someone you love. In an instant, your image of the future turns upside down. You face a torrent of decisions: Who will provide daily care? Which treatments should you consider? And how will you finance all you want to do? So often, before you’ve even had time to absorb the news, you’ve taken in your loved one and determined to care for him or her the best way you can.

It is only later you realise that no one has asked how you will care for yourself.

That is why the West of Ireland Alzheimer Foundation was formed. For years, families of Alzheimer’s patients had to deal with the confusion, frustration, and heartbreak of the disease without access to information, care assistance, or even moral support. However, in 1994 a group of committed Westerners whose lives were touched by Alzheimer’s determined to end the isolation.

Under the leadership of John Grant, now the foundation’s CEO, they formed an organisation dedicated to providing services to Alzheimer’s caregivers in Mayo, Galway, and Roscommon counties. From care assistance to educational efforts, each of our services responds to the needs of caregivers and their families.

These efforts are based on a simple truth – that caring for a person with Alzheimer’s requires tremendous patience, energy, and personal strength, and carers must be supported if they are to lead full lives and remain fit for the task.

***“You can best care
for your Alzheimer’s patient
with a little time and attention
for yourself.”***



West of Ireland Alzheimer
Foundation

*Winner of the 2002 FAS
National Community
Initiative Award*

QUALITY SERVICES THAT SUPPORT YOUR CARING

All of our services are designed to help Alzheimer's caregivers manage the unique stresses of this progressive, and as yet incurable, disease. Sometimes a sympathetic ear, a new coping technique, or a break from the round-the-clock demands of caring is all that is needed to help restore a sense of normality to the lives of a caregiver and his or her family. And, as all carers know, this sense of "normality" is desperately needed by the patient struggling with the effects of this devastating disease.

Home Support Services

If you're like many caregivers, you may feel that your loved one requires so much care that you couldn't ask someone to stand in for you – even for just an hour or two. Or even if there are people you can ask, you worry that they won't have the experience to manage Alzheimer's unexpected behaviours and mood swings. As a result, you can end up feeling like a prisoner in your own home.

Our in-home support services are designed to help you regain some of your freedom. Our trained care assistants come into your home and do all the things you would normally do for your loved one – from feeding to bathing to changing. This service provides a much-needed chance to attend to your own needs for a while – to run errands, take a walk, lie down for a nap, get your hair done, or just visit with friends.

And for your loved one, it's a few hours with a trained specialist who is there solely for him or her – to cook a favorite lunch, play cards, say prayers, or simply lend a fresh ear to stories from a bygone day.

In-home care schedules are arranged to match your needs with the availability of care assistants in your area. When you contact us, a advisor will visit you to set up regular weekly hours – to allow you to better balance your loved one's needs with those of yourself and your family.

Day Care

There are times when your personal demands require more than just a few hours at a stretch. That is why we provide full-day care in our two respite homes: Marian House in Ballindine, County Mayo, and Maryfield in Athenry, County Galway. Families from all three counties are invited to arrange a "day out" for their Alzheimer's patient, which includes lunch and activities tailored to guests' interests and abilities. Experienced care assistants attend to each patient's needs in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Hours and availability vary, so please contact us at the location most convenient to you.

Respite and Long-term Care

For even longer stays, the West of Ireland Alzheimer Foundation offers state-of-the-art, short-term residential homes: Marian House in Ballindine and Maryfield in Athenry.

Marian House is a bright, airy 12-bed facility that was the first in Ireland to be planned completely with Alzheimer's patients in mind. A large ring-shaped walkway in the centre of the house accommodates the Alzheimer drive to



Marian House, Ballindine.

wander, allowing guests to walk freely without losing their way.

Warm and welcoming, Maryfield offers both respite and long-term care to approximately 20 guests. Set on an elevated site, it overlooks historic Athenry and the scenic countryside.

Each home features our trademark “reminiscence gardens,” utilising floral displays, old-fashioned shrubs, and artifacts from earlier days to create safe and familiar surroundings. Guests can sit or stroll with care assistants in the fresh air, enjoying the roses or discussing the historic displays. The gardens are enclosed in an attractive mesh fence that allows guests to observe life on the street and the fields beyond. Guests can watch locals going about their business and feel part of the world around them while remaining safely within the bounds of the garden.

Nursing and care staff provide supervision around the clock. Families can avail themselves of this service as often as needed for a modest fee.



Maryfield, Athenry.

Help Lines

There are times for every carer when you need to speak to someone who understands your situation. That is why our offices serve as confidential help lines, where trained staff are available from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to discuss the disease and its management. We can answer questions about the progression of the disease; discuss strategies for dealing with problem behaviours; direct you to resources; or simply share the setbacks, fears, frustrations, and tiny victories that only those intimately acquainted with Alzheimer's disease can understand. Please see the back of this booklet to locate the help line in your area.

Education and Awareness

To help both carers and the public become more aware of Alzheimer's disease and its effects on patients and families, the West of Ireland Alzheimer Foundation sponsors a variety of educational events and services, including:

Materials Library. We maintain a library of Alzheimer's books, articles, videos, and audio tapes, which we lend to caregivers and other interested individuals.

Media Events. We frequently speak with members of the media who wish to inform the public about Alzheimer's-related issues. Our staff have been featured in a variety of local newspapers and on radio chat shows.

Speakers. Foundation representatives are available to speak to community groups interested in learning more about Alzheimer's disease, the demands of caring, and available resources.

Support Groups. The West of Ireland Alzheimer Foundation has assisted in the formation of a number of community-based support groups for

caregivers and their families. Meetings provide members with information and moral support, and have featured question-and-answer sessions with geriatricians and solicitors as well as in-group discussions on topics such as the spiritual demands of caring and other issues.



OUR APPROACH TO CARE

In providing our services, we pay close attention to the unique challenges of the Alzheimer's patient. A failing memory means that patients can not only forget a boiling kettle or their way home from the shop, but they can forget even to eat, drink, or use the toilet. The results can be devastating. Insufficient fluid intake, for example, can lead to repeated kidney infections. And without constantly using the muscles involved in drinking, some sufferers actually forget how to swallow.

Experience has taught us that these and similar consequences can be postponed or avoided entirely through the right approach to care. Our method combines proven techniques for symptom management with a profound respect for the individual being cared for.

Highly Trained Staff

One of the most fundamental aspects of caring is to be well-versed in the nature of Alzheimer's disease, its effects on sufferers and their families, and strategies for managing these effects. Our staff of trained care assistants and nurses receive both pre- and in-service training in areas such as:

- basic nursing skills and first aid
- hygiene
- lifting techniques
- aromatherapy and reflexology

- counselling
- relaxation techniques
- reminiscence therapy
- personal development
- occupational therapy
- diet and nutrition.



Such broad training provides each caregiver with a range of approaches for managing problem symptoms. Because of this, if one approach does not assist a particular patient, a caregiver can choose among several others to find the one that best meets the patient's needs.

And, of course, our caregivers are happy to assist you in exploring some of these techniques for yourself.

Individual Connections

Because our carers are trained in these areas, they can not only assist Alzheimer's patients with the basic tasks of living – like eating, bathing, and dressing – but they can work to reconnect with the individual behind the disease. One way carers do this is by encouraging patients in the use of old skills like knitting, singing, drawing, or even light dancing. By asking patients to join in a song or demonstrate a knitting technique, carers encourage them to use skills that were an important part of their earlier years and to feel vital, useful, and knowledgeable again.

Our care assistants are also trained in conversational techniques that draw out the unique character of each patient. Our staff spend time one-to-one with each patient, looking through old magazines or photos, asking questions, and attending to the answers. These simple yet focused conversations allow patients to continue using language and give them the joy of retrieving information that is still accessible to them.



Active Participation

To encourage patients to remain active participants in the world around them, we plan activities through which they interact with people and their environment. Day care might include moving and clapping to

old music or tossing a balloon around the room. Such simple activities stimulate social interaction, muscle coordination, and connection to the “here and now.”

In addition, we feel it is important that guests in our respite homes feel part of the running of the house. Depending on their interests and abilities, they may be invited to help with the dishes, fold clothes, or do some light dusting. Though all tasks are supervised, they allow guests to remain autonomous and feel like contributors, rather than bystanders. They also help patients connect with earlier times by performing tasks similar to those they would have done in their own homes. We have found that keeping patients active and involved is essential to keeping them healthy and preventing regression.

Familiar Routines

Because familiar patterns are essential in helping Alzheimer’s patients feel secure with new people and surroundings, our staff work closely with carers to maintain a patient’s normal, comfortable routine.

For respite care, our staff interview each carer to develop a mini-history of each guest. We find out when patients like to go to bed, what they like to eat, what kind of music they prefer, any unique talents or skills they have, and whether they like to play cards, chat, or pray. We also ask about environmental or social triggers that may upset them. This allows us to help ensure that patients enjoy the stimulation of a new environment with as little adjustment as possible.

Safety

Safety features are, of course, critical. One of the most basic elements of safety is supervision. That is why our staff are not only trained in Alzheimer's supervision, but in our day care and respite facilities, there are three to five staff members for every 10 guests. This ensures that staff are not overburdened and can attend closely to each patient's needs.

In addition to ample staffing, our facilities include safety features that protect Alzheimer's patients from distress and injury. Unbreakable plates and knick-knacks, easy-to-open interior doors, rounded furniture edges, and non-slip floors with smooth joints that won't catch shuffling feet all make daily life safer and more manageable for our guests.



Sensory Engagement

An often underutilised means for connecting with Alzheimer's patients is to engage their senses. While many carers have discovered the soothing power of music, our staff have also found success using aromatherapy and the power of fragrance to either calm or rejuvenate patients. In addition, they may also employ the healing power of touch, using reflexology to manipulate the hands and feet. Not only can such techniques awaken the senses, but the act of being touched and/or "pampered" can help frustrated patients feel approachable and acceptable again.

ACCESSING OUR SERVICES

If you would like to make use of our care services to provide a break for both yourself and your loved one, please contact us. All of our services are available at a modest fee, which covers a portion of the cost of providing them. They are accessible to full-time caregivers in Mayo, Galway, or Roscommon counties and are appropriate for patients at any stage of the disease. All we ask is that you seek an official diagnosis for your loved one from a qualified physician. Many unrelated conditions may produce symptoms similar to Alzheimer's, and because some of these respond to medication or other treatments, it is important that these be ruled out as possible causes of your loved one's behaviours.



Please contact us for more information at the location nearest you.

THE WEST OF IRELAND ALZHEIMER FOUNDATION

Main Office

Main Street, Ballindine, County Mayo
Tel./Help Line: 094 - 93 64900 • Fax: 094 - 93 64946
E-mail: westernalzheimers@eircom.net
Web site: www.westernalzheimer.ie

Galway Office

Colonial Buildings, Eglinton Street, Galway
Tel./Help Line: 091 - 565193 • Fax: 091 - 569223

Roscommon Office

Lanesboro Street, Roscommon
Tel./Help Line/Fax: 0903 - 27816

RESPITE HOMES

Marian House Respite Home

Ballindine, County Mayo
Tel./Fax: 094 - 93 64101

Maryfield Respite Home

Farnblake East, Athenry, County Galway
Tel./Fax: 091 - 844833





HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT OUR MISSION

While we have received generous support from FAS and the Department of Health, we still need to raise substantial funds each year to provide quality services by trained caregivers in safe, pleasant facilities. If you wish to assist families who are committed to providing home-based care for their Alzheimer's patient for as long as possible, we invite you to make a donation to the West of Ireland Alzheimer Foundation. Your gift will help bring balance to the lives of caregivers, their families, and those suffering with this debilitating disease.

Yes, I would like to support the work of the West of Ireland Alzheimer Foundation.

Name _____

Address _____

Tel. (home) _____ (work) _____

I wish to provide support through:

A charitable donation in the amount noted:

€ 125 € 60 € 25

€ 15 € 10 Other _____

**If you would like to join our weekly lotto,
please see overleaf.**

**Please mail this form along with your cheque,
if applicable, to:**

The West of Ireland Alzheimer Foundation

Main Street, Ballindine

County Mayo

Thank you for your support!

– Over –

SUPPORT OUR LOTTO

- Weekly lottery (€ 25 quarterly)

Please select your lottery numbers by entering a number in each box from 1 to 32, inclusive.

--	--	--	--

Method of payment

- Cheque payable to the "West of Ireland Alzheimer Foundation"
- Bank Standing Order Authorisation
(please complete box below):

To the Manager,

Bank _____

Address _____

Branch Code _____

Please make payment as debit of account number:

--

Customer signature:

Please Quote Payee Ref. (*for office use only*):

--

To: AIB Bank, Claremorris, County Mayo
Account Number: 28298104
Bank Code: 93-74-44

Please mail this form along with your cheque, if applicable, to:

The West of Ireland Alzheimer Foundation
Main Street, Ballindine
County Mayo

Thank you for your support!

Supported by FAS. Registered in Ireland No. 244419.
Reg. No. CHY 11416.