

Private HomeCare News

April 2025

Welcome from Elizabeth

Dear Carers,

This newsletter is a great opportunity to connect with you all. You are the heart of Private HomeCare, and we are so grateful to have you on our team.

Right now, our office team—led by Senior Recruitment and Compliance Manager Patsy Philpott, with support from Janet Bolger—has been working extremely hard, on very short notice, to prepare for a HSE 'flash audit.' (Thanks to the rest of the Recruitment Team who are picking up the burden on normal activities whilst Patsy and Janet are temporarily focusing on the HSE audit.)

As you know, home care is under increasing scrutiny, and we must always meet the highest standards. Thankfully, we want to meet those high standards! That's why we invested in our own training centre back in 2019. Read on to discover exciting news about our latest investment in training.

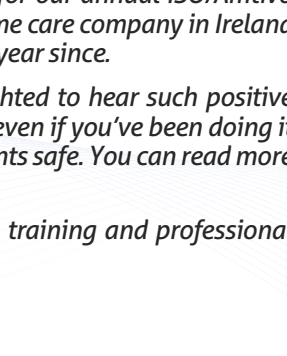
Speaking of standards, in addition to the HSE audit, Patsy and her team are also preparing for our annual ISO/Amtivo audit. This is a voluntary audit that we choose to take part in. In 2009, we became the first home care company in Ireland to apply for this international quality standard, and we have successfully maintained it every year since.

Training and compliance are important for every member of Private HomeCare. I was delighted to hear such positive feedback from experienced carers about our new Refresher Training Course. Just like driving, even if you've been doing it for years, a refresher helps you stay sharp and, most importantly, keeps both you and your clients safe. You can read more about it below.

As always, we appreciate your dedication to your clients and your commitment to ongoing training and professional growth.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Nicholson
Founder and Managing Director



New Training Centre – Opening This Summer!

We are excited to announce the opening of our brand-new Training Centre in Lucan this summer! This investment reflects our ongoing commitment to providing you with the best training and support.

The new facility is designed to enhance your skills with hands-on training and state-of-the-art equipment. It features mobility aids, lifting devices, and practical training areas to help you gain confidence in real-life home care situations.

Whether you are new to caring or looking to upskill, the centre will offer a range of courses to support your professional growth.

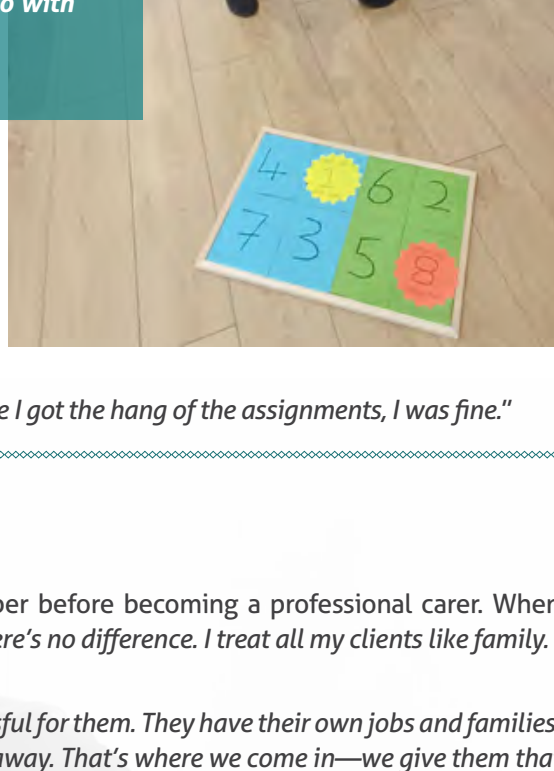
This expansion reinforces our dedication to maintaining the highest standards in home care—because quality care starts with well-trained carers!



Spotlight: Carer Miriam Kavanagh Invents Beanbag Bingo!

Miriam Kavanagh has always been drawn to caring for others. A full-time mother for many years, she didn't initially think she could work as a carer without the appropriate qualifications. However, Private HomeCare assured her that she could train through them.

"I've been working with Private HomeCare for about a year now," Miriam says. "I only have two modules left, and then I'll be fully qualified. Right now, I'm doing the Palliative Care QQI module, and next, I'll choose between Intellectual Disabilities or Work Experience. I think I'll go with Intellectual Disabilities."



Balancing Studying and Working

Miriam faced a learning curve when starting her studies. "I never had a laptop or computer," she admits. "I have four kids, and the youngest is 14. They had laptops, but I never did. I had to figure out how to turn a computer on! But since I had helped my kids with their schoolwork over the years, once I got the hang of the assignments, I was fine."

Caring for a Stranger vs. Family

Miriam had personal experience caring for a family member before becoming a professional carer. When asked how it differs from caring for a stranger, she says, "There's no difference. I treat all my clients like family. I get to know them, and they know I'm there if they need me."

She also understands the challenges families face. "It's stressful for them. They have their own jobs and families, and sometimes they just need 30 minutes or an hour to step away. That's where we come in—we give them that break."

Inventing 'Beanbag Bingo'

As part of her Care of the Older Person QQI course, Miriam needed to create an activity for Activities Day. She wanted to think outside the box.

"Most people like bingo, so I thought—how can I make a game that's more accessible for people with cognitive or physical challenges?"

Her original idea was a tabletop game where players toss a light beanbag onto a board. However, after testing it with clients, one woman who had suffered a stroke suggested placing the board on the floor instead. That small change made the game even more inclusive.

Miriam created the board using a wooden frame from a discount store, large coloured sheets of cardboard, and a marker for numbering. The game is simple: each player gets three chances to throw a light beanbag onto the board. If your beanbag lands on number 4, you earn 4 stars. After 3 goes each, the person with the highest number of stars is the winner. "The beanbags are easy to grip, not too heavy, and won't cause injury. I've found that people really get into it—they cheer, clap, and have a great laugh."

A Low-Cost, Fun Alternative

As a mother, Miriam is used to coming up with creative, budget-friendly ways to entertain. She even has a DIY alternative for beanbags: "You can fill the toes of socks with rice—Penneys sells socks with separate toes that work well. It's a cheap and fun way to make your own."

Her game has been a hit, not just with older clients but with their families too. "Their kids and grandkids love playing it—it's something everyone can enjoy."

And the name of her invention? Beanbag Bingo.

A New Chapter

Reflecting on her journey, Miriam says, "I've spent years raising my kids, and now it's time for me. I absolutely love working as a carer."

Thanks to carer Miriam!

Refresher Training Course

Recently, we were made aware of an incident from another home care provider where a carer, without proper training, accidentally caused a client harm while assisting with compression stockings. This highlights the serious risks involved when performing tasks outside of your training, and / or are not detailed in each client's personalised care plan. While this did not happen within our company, it serves as an important reminder of why ongoing training and refresher courses are so important.

So it is timely that we are introducing our Refresher Training Course now. This course is especially designed for carers who have already completed their initial training and require a refresher to reinforce best practices, update skills, and maintain compliance with Private HomeCare and HSE standards. It is particularly beneficial for carers who may have developed knowledge gaps

I found the course very refreshing, it reminds carers to do the job in the way it should be done, as time goes on we sometimes get used to clients and we forget to work professionally but with the skills refresher course it helps the carers a lot. I enjoyed the course and I'm happy I attended. It has improved my care skills indeed. I will recommend to other carers.

Testimonial from
Carer Lola

Course Objectives:

- ✓ Reinforce and update essential caregiving skills and knowledge.
- ✓ Ensure compliance with Private HomeCare and HSE regulations.
- ✓ Improve the quality of care provided to clients, including those with complex needs.
- ✓ Enhance carers' confidence and competence in handling daily caregiving tasks.
- ✓ Reduce accidents and improve emergency response preparedness.
- ✓ Promote effective communication and teamwork among carers.

Duration & Schedule:

Total Duration:
4 hours

Scheduled:
Monthly

Time:
10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Topics Covered:

Theory (Knowledge-Based Training)

1. Background & Structure/Core Values
2. Operational Tasks & Handling (OTH) – Clocking in/out, digital tasks, schedule management
3. Roles & Responsibilities of a Carer
4. Dress Code & Professional Presentation
5. Understanding and Implementing Care Plans
6. Accountability & Double Assist Calls
7. Confidentiality & GDPR Compliance
8. Effective Communication with Clients, Families, and Colleagues
9. Understanding Dementia and Appropriate Care Approaches
10. Medication Management & Best Practices
11. Mandatory Training: HSE Land Courses & QQI Certifications
12. Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) & Hand Hygiene

Practical Skills (Hands-on Training)

1. Hand Hygiene & PPE: Proper Donning & Doffing Procedures
2. Personal Care Demonstration Using 'Meet Susie' Model:
 - Undressing & Dressing
 - Personal Hygiene & Grooming
 - Skin Care & Pressure Area Care
 - Oral Hygiene
 - Incontinence Care & Catheter Care (Emptying Bag, Attaching/Detaching Night Bag)
3. Manual Handling & Positioning Techniques:
 - Rolling a Client Safely
 - Sitting a Client Forward
 - Using a Sliding Sheet to Move a Client in Bed
 - Equipment - including Adjusting and Using a Profile Bed

If you are ever asked to perform something not included in a client's care plan, please do not proceed—call the office for guidance.

Your dedication to high-quality care is greatly appreciated, and we expect everyone to stay engaged with their training plan and CPD (Continuous Professional Development) plan.

Infection Prevention and Control : Shingles

We have had a few reported cases of Shingles in the community. Shingles is caused by the reactivation of the Varicella Zoster Virus (the same virus that causes chickenpox). While you cannot catch shingles from someone with shingles, non-immune individuals (those who never had chickenpox) can contract chickenpox from an infected person.

Key Points:

Shingles mainly affects adults over 40 and those with weakened immune systems.

The rash is contagious until blisters have dried/crusted over (about 5-7 days).

Home Support Workers who are pregnant or non-immune should avoid working with affected clients—please inform the office if this applies to you.

Precautions for Home Support Workers:

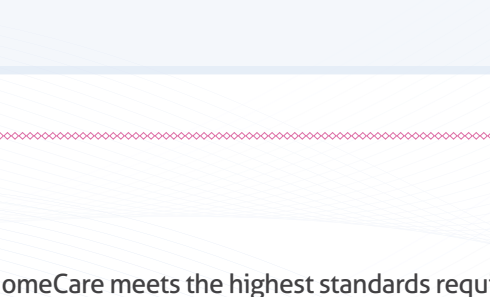
- ✓ Check your immune/pregnancy status.
- ✓ Practice strict hand hygiene.
- ✓ Use PPE (gloves, aprons, masks) during personal care.
- ✓ Dispose of soiled items properly and wash laundry separately.
- ✓ Keep the environment clean—disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- ✓ Encourage clients to wear loose clothing and keep the rash clean and dry.
- ✓ Report any concerns to the office immediately.

For any questions or concerns, please contact the office. Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our community safe.

CPL is a Great Place To Work Winner 2025

We are delighted to announce that our parent company, Cpl, has once again secured a spot in the Top 10 Best Workplaces at the Great Place to Work Awards 2025, ranking 10th in the Super Large Category. This marks the fourth consecutive year that Cpl has maintained its Top 10 position, a testament to its enduring commitment to excellence.

This achievement reflects the dedication and hard work of all our teams, including those at Private HomeCare, and reinforces our shared commitment to fostering a supportive, inclusive and rewarding work environment.



How We Prepare for Audits

Whether it's an ISO audit or an HSE inspection, ensuring that Private HomeCare meets the highest standards requires ongoing diligence, meticulous record-keeping, and teamwork across the business.

Audits are an essential part of maintaining compliance, improving efficiency, and upholding our commitment to delivering high-quality care. Respecting our commitment to GDPR means that external auditors must sign data protection agreements before accessing our files. Preparation is a year-round process that involves:

1 Maintaining Up-to-Date Policies and Procedures

Auditors assess whether our policies and procedures align with best practices, legal requirements, and industry standards. This means regular reviews and updates to reflect the latest regulations, ensuring our team follows clear and consistent guidelines.

2 Accurate and Accessible Documentation

A well-organised filing system is critical for audit success. From employee training records to client care plans, all documentation must be complete, accurate, and easily retrievable. Digital file storage and categorisation help ensure that essential records are always at hand.

3 Compliance with Training and Qualifications

Every team member must have up-to-date certifications, training, and qualifications. This includes tracking renewal dates, scheduling refresher courses, and ensuring that everyone meets regulatory requirements.

Attention Carers: You May Be Audited Too!

As part of the audit process, the HSE may select individual carers for review.

If you're not up-to-date with your annual training or missing required certifications, you could be temporarily stood down from work until you're compliant.

Please make sure your training is up to date—it's not just important, it's required.

4 Internal Audits and Self-Assessments

Before an external audit takes place, we conduct internal audits to identify potential gaps and areas for improvement. These self-assessments help us proactively address any compliance issues before they arise.

5 Keeping Client and Employee Data Secure

Confidentiality and data protection are key concerns during audits. We ensure that all personal and sensitive information is stored securely and accessed only by authorised personnel, in line with GDPR regulations.

6 Team Readiness and Communication

Audit preparation is a team effort. Staff across all departments must be informed and prepared to answer questions about their roles, responsibilities, and procedures. Regular training sessions and briefings help ensure that everyone understands their part in maintaining compliance.

7 External Auditors and GDPR

Note that all external auditors must sign GDPR compliance before accessing any of our internal files.

Private HomeCare was the first home care provider in Ireland to apply for and be awarded the international quality standard ISO / Amtivo. Our commitment to quality has never wavered, and these audits reaffirm our dedication to excellence in home care services.

Help us Shine Online

Unlike other home care companies, we don't advertise on tv, the radio or bus shelters and we don't drive branded cars. So we have to work extra hard for people to know about us. If you think we are a good employer, and / or provide a professional home care service to our clients, we would love to hear your thoughts.

If you feel like leaving us a review on Google, Facebook, or Indeed, we'd really appreciate it. No pressure at all—but every review posted enters you into a monthly raffle where one lucky person wins a €25 gift card!

Private HomeCare Shortlisted for Two Prestigious Awards!

We are thrilled to announce that Private HomeCare has been shortlisted for Home Care Provider of the Year in both the private and public categories at the Irish HealthCare Centre Awards. This incredible achievement would not have been possible without our dedicated team. Congratulations to everyone—well done!



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