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GPs demand €60k a year for 'free' care of elderly

Maeve Sheehan and Wayne O'Connor
EXCLUSIVE

GPs are demanding fees of up to €60,000 a year for attending elderly residents in private nursing homes who are entitled to free doctor services.

Medical practices are charging substantial 'retainer fees' regardless of the fact that the vast majority of nursing home residents have over-70s free GP visit cards, and often a medical card as well.

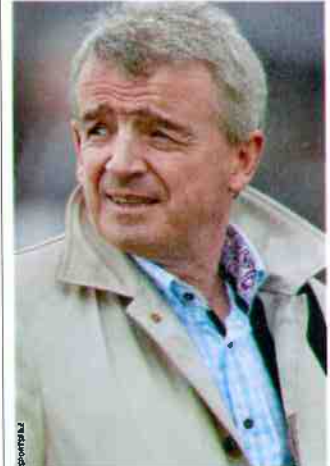
An internal survey by Nursing Homes Ireland (NHI), the representative association, has found that 30pc of private nursing homes are asked for a retainer fee by GPs, but only around 13pc agreed to pay. The average annual retainer fee charged by GPs ranged from €300 to €40,000 a year, according to the report.

However, the *Sunday Independent* has been told that a number of Dublin nursing homes are paying retainers of more than €5,000 a month — or €60,000 a year — to GP practices so that their residents can access medical care.

One home in Dublin charges a mandatory fee of €100 a month, or €1,200 per year, per resident for 'doctor services'.

Another home in Kildare bills residents for the quarterly €25 or annual €100 fee that the GP charges to see them.

ROSS LASHES O'LEARY AS RYANAIR FORCED TO PAY €117k COMPO A DAY



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Paul Kimmage on Dublin v Mayo Sport



BRENDAN O'CONNOR

This Guy's in love with you

We love Guy Verhofstadt. We have all agreed that he is, as they used to say in agricultural circles in this country, a queer name but great stuff.

It's not just the floppy hair and the big glasses, which lend him a touch of Dennis Taylor meets Dame Edna meets Elton John (though those things are central to his appeal). It's mainly that he came to see us. And he told us what we wanted to hear.

We go crazy for any foreigner who gives to the time of day. And when they go one step further, as Guy did, and basically side with us against the Brits, then they have us at *tilde*.

Guy says he will make sure no one hurts us. He promised us that he will never allow us to suffer for Britain's decision to leave the EU. We swooned. We didn't even titter that his name was pronounced ghee.

He even went and walked around a farm. We love that. A farm at the Border, if you don't mind. And then he talked all happy-dippy about how he couldn't see any Border, and the cows certainly couldn't. The only thing that could have made us happier is if Guy had gone to the Ploughing.

There would have been a national collective orgasm if Guy had arrived down there in a helicopter with Louis Walsh and Vogue. If Guy had come on the radio with Sean O'Rourke at the Ploughing we would have decided that, Belgian or not, Guy should be the president.

Indeed, if we knew whether or not we needed a president next year Guy would be a shoo-in. But it looks as if we won't know if we need a president next year until it's too late, because Michael D is too busy to tell us if he is going for the Pair Deal Presidency.

When the Ploughing wasn't on the news (it rained last night... they're drying the place well... the people still came... look at Leo looking awkward... look at all the expensive machinery that all the

farmers claim they can only dream of buying), Guy was on the news. Like Aki Chopra before him, we've decided that Guy gets us. He's one of us. We have adopted him. He can play the five nights in Crozier.

Guy didn't specifically say how he is going to save us from Brexit. He mumbled something about Northern Ireland staying in the single market. He didn't explain how that would affect trade between Northern Ireland, in the EU, and Britain, which is pretty much part of the same country, but not in the EU. We didn't care. Guy is currently the solution to all our problems. And what could possibly go wrong there? Nothing.

Just ask the last person who was the solution to all our problems — Michael O'Leary.

Don't make us angry, Guy. You wouldn't like us when we're angry.

London Isis plot to attack Dublin targets revealed

EXCLUSIVE INVESTIGATION

Paul Williams

ISLAMIST extremists responsible for the London Bridge terror attack, which claimed eight lives and left 41 injured, planned to stage a similar atrocity in Dublin, the *Sunday Independent* can reveal.

Khuram Shazad Butt (27) and Rachid Redouane (31), who with a third accomplice were shot dead by police following the June 3 attack, recruited a number of high-profile locations in Dublin two years ago, including a nationally known family-friendly tourist attraction, it has been learned.

It is believed that the two jihadists changed their plans after they were spotted by a terrorist mentor that Ireland would suit Isis better as a logistics base from where internet frauds could be carried out to raise funds.

The new intelligence is evidence of the difficulties faced in meeting the challenge of highly mobile terrorist cells operating within Europe.

Butt and Redouane, who was married to an Irish woman and lived in Dublin for a number of years, discussed the prospect of carrying out an attack at a number of locations identified in Dublin, according to sources, including an Irish woman radicalised after converting to Islam.

At the time, the two were under the control and influence of a 33-year-old Pakistani-born UK citizen named 'Raza' who operated an internet fraud targeting Irish companies from an address in Santry, north Dublin.

Proceeds from the fraud were intended to provide logistical support to jihadists in the form of cash, transport and false documentation, including passports via Irish-based Isis sympathisers.

It is understood that the Garda Counter Terrorism International unit has now established that Butt and Redouane stayed at the Santry address with 'Raza' on several occasions up to two years ago.

The Pakistani-born UK

citizen is wanted by Scotland Yard and MI5 on suspicion of being involved in orchestrating the London Bridge attack.

He is suspected of radicalising young Muslims for Isis and orchestrating similar internet crimes — known as invoice redirection fraud — in the UK.

'Raza' is also wanted by gardai in connection with a €2.8m internet fraud from an Irish company last year.

He registered a front company in Santry which was then used to set up a bank account through which the money was to be transferred to other hidden accounts in the UK.

However, Raza fled the country shortly after the Garda Economic Fraud Bureau — formerly the Fraud Squad — swooped and froze the money.

Connections between the fraud, Isis and the London attackers only came to light when an Irish woman, radicalised after converting to Islam while in the UK, broke her silence in the wake of the June outrage.

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— Elaine, Kilkenny

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Taoiseach will urge May to give a 'clear' border message

Philip Ryan

TAOISEACH Leo Varadkar will tomorrow urge British Prime Minister Theresa May to produce a 'clear and reassuring message' on how a border can be avoided in Northern Ireland in the aftermath of Brexit.

Friday, Mrs May said the UK would not accept any physical infrastructure at the border but gave few details of how this will be achieved. The Taoiseach 'cautiously' welcomed the speech which focused on Britain's offer of a two-year transition period for leaving the EU. Tomorrow, Mr Varadkar will travel to

Downing Street for a bilateral meeting with Mrs May. A senior government source said the North and the border 'will feature strongly' in the Taoiseach's discussion with the prime minister. 'The Taoiseach is expected to indicate to the prime minister that, in order to demonstrate that sufficient

progress has been made on Irish issues, there must be a clear and reassuring message about how the border will be avoided,' the source said. The Government is adamant there should be no border between the North and South after Brexit but such a scenario is deemed near impossible if Britain remains

outside the EU customs union. Mrs May is under pressure from her own party to take a tough stance with the EU and push for a hard Brexit which would leave Britain outside the customs union. The Taoiseach will also use the Downing Street meeting to discuss the ongoing stalemate between Sinn Féin and the

Democratic Unionist Party on restoring the power-sharing executive. Mr Varadkar will insist Ireland will not support a return of direct rule from London. Deadlock on restoring the Assembly has rumbled on for almost a year after Sinn Féin collapsed the institutions over the 'cash for ash' controversy.

News in Brief

GSOC to probe man's death after arrest

A man died following an incident which involved him crashing his car into a steel barrier in Co Dublin. After smashing into the barrier shortly after 9pm, the man - who was aged 35 and had no criminal history - broke into two homes on Temple Manor Drive, Lamekin Avenue, Greenhills, Walkinstown, Dublin 12. Gardaí arrived at the scene where he was said to have become aggressive and officers were required to arrest and restrain him. As he was being removed from the house, he became unresponsive and medical assistance was called. He was taken to Tallaght Hospital and was later pronounced dead. GSOC is investigating the incident.

Fatal collisions at Tullow and Monaghan

Gardaí have appealed for witnesses after a pedestrian was killed near Tullow in the early hours of Saturday. The incident happened on the R725, Castledermot Road, at around 4.30am. The pedestrian - a man in his early 40s - was fatally injured when he was struck by an SUV. The driver of the SUV was not injured. And a woman in her 60s died after she was involved in a road crash on the Monaghan to Ballybay Road, Co Monaghan, at around 4.45pm yesterday. She was a passenger in a car being driven by a woman in her 40s. That woman was seriously injured and she was taken to Monaghan Hospital for treatment.

Petition for wheelchair users

CEO of the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA), Rosemary Keogh, will be joined by people with disabilities on Tuesday to submit a high-priority petition, signed by over 8,000 people, to government ministers and TDs outside Leinster House. The petition, which will be handed over around 11am, calls for an end to the unfair treatment of people with disabilities and to ensure Budget 2018 is an inclusive Budget for all, so that people with disabilities have a fair and equal opportunity to live their lives independently.

No winner of €2.9m Lotto jackpot

There was no winner of last night's €2.94.118 Lotto jackpot. Numbers were 9, 26, 27, 30, 43, 44 (bonus 17). Plus One were 3, 5, 10, 11, 18, 28 (bonus 24). Plus Two were 1, 3, 7, 23, 26, 42 (bonus 28). The raffle number was 7529.

No timeline for Halawa prison release

Ibrahim Halawa's sister, Fatima, has said they do not know exactly when their brother is going to be freed. The 21-year-old from Firhouse in Dublin was acquitted of all charges by a court in Egypt last Monday. However, he remains in prison in the country. Ms Halawa said a process still has to take place where documents are sent to the prison. She said the family expects that he will then be released to a police station, where they will re-interview him one last time.

Cardiologist leaves €534,000 in will

The internationally known cardiologist and health campaigner Risteard Mulcahy has left €534,442 in his will. Mr Mulcahy of The Palms, Roebuck, Co Dublin, died on July 1, 2016. Other wills: Anthony Burke, Harrogate Road, Leeds, England, director, €3,702,642; Julia Daly, Monaca, Co Cork, €3,466,482; Patrick Ryan, financial adviser, North Circular Rd, Limerick, €1,776,869; Henry Kavanagh, brewery official, The Crescent, Monkstown, Dublin, €1,712,940; Goodwin's Parking, Trimshilly, Co Wicklow, €1,599,560; Mary Harrington, director, Ranelagh, Dublin, €1,537,238; Patricia Murphy, homemaker, Templeogue Rd, Dublin, €1,496,172; and Edmond Sheeran, insurance broker, Skerries, Dublin, €1,095,290.

The value of estates may include property, including the family home, and should not be regarded as cash amounts.

GPs charge €60k to care for elderly in nursing homes

Residents given bills despite being entitled to free treatment

Continued from page 1

ago as 2011 that GPs must not charge fees. A letter from a senior official to the NHI said GPs were paid an annual fee for each patient in a private nursing home. Health Minister Simon Harris has said the GP charges are 'very discouraging'. In a letter to Senator Pádraig Ó Ceidigh, who raised the issue on behalf of NHI in June, Mr Harris noted the 'disparity in the level and frequency of GP services provided to nursing homes from one unit to another'.



LETTER: Minister Simon Harris

He said GP services to nursing home residents would be 'dealt with' as part of the ongoing review of their State contracts. 'I will continue to consider all options up to and including legislation to ensure absolute fairness and transparency on this issue,' Mr Daly said. Government officials are now looking to establish a method of collecting the data on extra charges.

The demand for retainer fees by GPs was highlighted by a number of the 338 homes contacted by the *Sunday Independent* as part of an investigation published last weekend. The internal NHI survey found that 18pc of homes were asked by GPs to pay the fee but refused, a further 18pc agreed to pay a retainer to GPs, while the remainder said they were not

asked to pay a fee. Of those that paid, 87pc did not pass the retention fee on to their residents. A quarter of the homes paying a GP retainer fee are in Dublin, with the next highest numbers in Kildare and Meath. Homes in Cavan, Monaghan, Mayo, Louth and Westmeath also reported paying the additional fee. One home told the NHI surveyors that a GP asked for a fee of €15,000 to take on residents. The home refused to pay the fee and since then has faced 'severe difficulties' in finding doctors for new residents.

A second home reported that one GP practices in south Dublin stopped providing care to its residents after the home refused to pay a retainer. According to the survey, the retainer fee paid to GPs ranged from €300 per resident a year to €40,000 a year. One GP charged €500 per resident a year, in return for visiting the home once a week and being 'available' to take calls. National Association of GPs CEO Chris Goodey denied that doctors were charging to see residents who are entitled to free care. 'There are situations where GPs are employed by nursing homes, where they do not have a resident GP,' he said. 'They are put on as medical

directors or they look after governance, they help to comply with Hqa issues but they are not to see patients.' GPs have claimed the fees they are paid by the State under the medical card scheme do not cover the administrative work they are being asked to complete in nursing homes, such as paperwork relating to medication. Their capitation, fees under the general medical card scheme have been cut in recent years.

The problem has been exacerbated by a shortage of doctors, particularly in rural areas. Mervyn Taylor, of the advocacy group Sage, said: 'If further supports or incentives are needed then the representative bodies for GPs should say clearly and publicly what they want and nursing homes should not be taking it out on the residents.' NHI CEO Tadhg Daly said: 'Nursing home residents must retain equal access to the wide range of health services that are essential to support and promote their healthcare needs.' Stephen McMahon, director of the Irish Patients' Association, said: 'This is eye-opening and sheds a new light on the extra charges nursing home residents face. Any monitoring of the sector by Government is welcome.'

TRAFFIC CHAOS HITS RACE



VICTORIOUS: Maria McCambridge was the first woman home in yesterday's SSE Airtricity Dublin Half Marathon in Donabate. Some of the 9,000 runners missed the race because of severe traffic problems before the start

Tax-free windfall from Colm Cooper testimonial dinner

Mark O'Regan

THE Revenue Commissioners will not tax the estimated €250,000 to be raised by the landmark testimonial dinner for former GAA star Colm Cooper's *Sunday Independent* has learned. The cost of booking a table

for the high profile event - the first of its kind for a Gaelic footballer - is €5,000. Each of the available 50 tables will seat 10 people. A GAA spokesperson has confirmed they are 'not happy' with the event which they insist is pushing the rules governing amateurism in the

association to a new level. While they felt they legally had no option but to give the go-ahead for the black-tie event, the GAA will not be officially represented at the dinner scheduled to take place on Friday, October 27, at the Intercontinental Hotel in Ballsbridge, Dublin.

It has now emerged the tax-man will take a benign view of the money raised at the event - which is expected to attract a galaxy of sports stars. The Revenue Commissioners confirmed money earned is not taxable where the player was not obliged - either contractually or by custom' - to

hold a testimonial. Two charities will benefit from part of the proceeds: the Kerry Cancer Support Group and Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children in Dublin. Cooper (36), a former Kerry forward, won five All-Ireland titles with his county before retiring in April.

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