

**Care provided to rest home resident with dementia
(02HDC16226, 10 July 2003)**

Rest home ~ Dementia ~ Standard of care ~ Rights 1(2), 3, 4(2)

A complaint was made that a rest home did not respect a resident's dignity and independence in that the rest home owner: (1) pulled and pushed the 89-year-old woman by her wrists in an inappropriate manner; (2) hid her walking aid so that she was unable to mobilise; (3) placed her walking aid in such a manner that she was restrained from moving; and (4) failed to attend to her appropriately, leaving her in the lounge late at night, cold and naked except for an incontinence pad.

Independent nursing advice noted that sometimes a resident with dementia will not know what to do with either a walker or a belt and, in such circumstances, it is often appropriate to walk backwards holding the resident's hands, so that he or she can look into the caregiver's face for reassurance.

The Commissioner reasoned that: (a) the way in which the woman was guided backwards around the rest home by the owner was appropriate; (b) there was no substance to the allegation that the owner hid the woman's walking frame in a manner that did not respect her dignity and independence; and (c) there was no inappropriate restraint of the woman using her walking frame, and no evidence that the owner took any action to compromise the woman's ability to mobilise independently. Accordingly, the rest home did not breach Rights 1(2), 3 or 4(2) in this respect.

However, the owner of the rest home breached Rights 1(2), 3 and 4(2) by allowing the woman to sit semi-naked at night in an area that could be freely accessed by other residents of the home. A resident's privacy and dignity should always be preserved unless the situation is a medical emergency.