

Orders and Guidelines relevant to the Regulations of Centres providing institutional care for the Elder

Introduction

As a country with a rapidly ageing population in South Asia, Sri Lanka is undergoing a significant demographic transition. The number of people aged 60 and above doubled from 6.6% in 1981 to 12.4% in 2012 and increased upto 18% by 2024 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012: 2024*).

*provisional

Although ageing is a natural biological process, due to its social, economic and health conditions, many adverse impacts have arisen in relation to elder care services. According to data from the National Secretariat for Elders, there were approximately 456 elderly homes in Sri Lanka by 2025, and it is reported that nearly 15,000 older persons reside in these facilities. When any organisation or institution is engaged in providing services or assistance to older persons, it is required to register with the National Secretariat for Elders in accordance with the provisions of the Protection of the Rights of Elders Act, No. 9 of 2000, as amended by Act No. 5 of 2011. Accordingly, as at 31 December 2025, only 143 elder care homes had been registered with the National Secretariat for Elders.

Although elderly homes are established to provide social care for the elderly, particularly in the context of the erosion of traditional social values and increasing social complexities, it is evident that many of these institutions are not currently maintained in accordance with the required standards and regulations, due to various social and economic factors.

The concept of elderly homes, which emerged as a social welfare service around the 1980s, has, in some instances, evolved into a profit-oriented enterprise.

Elderly homes can be broadly classified into two categories based on their sources of financing.

1. Elderly homes providing services free of charge

2. Fee-based elderly homes

Further, several types of elder homes can be identified in Sri Lanka based on the management authority and ownership structure. They are,

1. Government-operated elderly homes

2. Privately operated elderly homes/elder care centres

3. Commercially operated elderly homes/ elder care centres

- i. Sole proprietor businesses**
- ii. Partnerships**
- iii. Private companies**
- iv. Public companies**
- v. Listed companies**

4. Elderly homes/ elder care centres operated by non-governmental and civil society organisations

5. Elderly homes/ elder care centres operated by religious institutions

6. Nursing homes

7. Any other institution or organisation that provides residential care services for elders who do not fall into the above categories.

Objective

To issue orders and provide guidelines to carry out regulatory functions by providing proper guidance and understanding to overcome the problematic situations that have arisen due to the deficiencies in the existing methods and non-compliance with the prescribed standards in the establishment and maintenance of an elderly home.

Current Legal Frameworks and Compliance

1. The National Council for Elders and the National Secretariat for Elders have been empowered under the Protection of the Rights of Elders Act No. 9 of 2000, as amended by Act No. 5 of 2011, to regulate, supervise, monitor, and make policy decisions relating to elderly homes.
2. The National Council for Elders and the National Secretariat for Elders have been empowered by the Gazette dated 16.03.2012 for the registration of elderly homes.
3. Sri Lanka Standards Institute, Elders Care Housing Standard SLS 2015 (1506: 2015) Grade 8
4. National Policy for the Elders in Sri Lanka (2025)

Hereinafter, all types of institutions providing institutional care services for the elders referred to in this document shall be named to read as “elder care centres.”

The Elder

Any person who has completed 60 years of age is defined as an elder, and the National Policy for Elders of Sri Lanka (2025) states that it is essential to ensure the protection of the rights, dignity and well-being of elders, recognising their invaluable contribution to family, community and national development.

Elder Care Centre

An elder care centre is any institution, in any form, that provides residential care services to elderly persons, operated by a government institution (including Central Government/ Provincial Councils/ Semi-Government Institutions/ Statutory Institutions/ Institutions established by law) or by non-governmental organisations, voluntary organisations, religious institutions, private institutions or individuals, and accommodating five or more elders.

Orders for the Establishment of an Elder Care Centre and the Proper Maintenance of Existing Elder Care Centres

Elder care centres are established and maintained in various forms by government institutions (including Central Government/ Provincial Councils/ Semi-Government Institutions/ Statutory Institutions/ Institutions established by law) or by non-governmental organisations, voluntary organisations, religious institutions, private institutions or individuals for a range of social and economic reasons. These care centres should have equal opportunities for all elders, including bedridden elders.

Therefore, it is necessary to issue orders for the establishment and maintenance of new elder care centres. It is expected that these provisions will set out the standards to be followed by any individual or organisation intending to establish and maintain an elder care centre, as well as to ensure the proper management of existing elder care centres.

1. Orders for the Establishment of an Elder Care Centre

1.1 Orders for Basic Needs

- 1.1.1 After submitting the request letter to establish an elder care centre to the relevant Divisional Secretariat, the application form issued by the National Secretariat for Elders for the construction of an elder care centre should be obtained.
- 1.1.2 After completing the application and submitting it to the Grama Niladhari of the division where the desired land or building is located, it should be submitted to the Divisional Secretariat along with the following documents:

- i. In the case of an institution or organisation, a certified copy of the registration certificate issued by the institution stating that the organisation is registered with the government
- ii. Disaster Officer Report
- iii. National Building Research Organisation Report (NBRO)
- iv. Environmental Report
- v. Certified Copy of the Deed
- vi. Approved Building Plan
- vii. If a group merges with another party and operate the elder care centre, the particular agreement signed between the two parties
- viii. If the elder care centre is operated on a lease basis, the relevant lease agreement
- ix. Project report relevant to the construction of the elder care centre
(in accordance with the format)

1.1.3 After confirming that the location is suitable for operating an elder care centre through an on-site inspection by the Field Officers (Elder Rights Promotion Officer/ Social Service Officer/ Development Officer) of the Divisional Secretariat, all the above-mentioned documents should be recommended by the Divisional Secretary and approved by the National Secretariat for Elders.

2. Orders on the Registration of Elder Care Centres

- 2.1 The application form for registration of elder care centres shall be completed in accordance with the prescribed format and submitted to the relevant Divisional Secretariat.
- 2.2 In case the applicant is an organisation, the following documents should be submitted with the application:
 - i. A copy of the constitution of the organisation
 - ii. Report of the final Annual General Meeting regarding the registration of the elder home
 - iii. A copy of the certified statement of accounts of the organisation for the previous year
 - iv. A report on the services and assistance provided by the organisation
 - v. A public health inspection report with the recommendation of the Public Health Inspector of the area where the institution is intended to be established.
- 2.3 In case the applicant is an individual, the following documents should be submitted with the application form.
 - i. A report on the services and assistance provided by the person

- ii. A report from the Grama Niladhari of the division to which the elder care centres belong
 - iii. A report on the income, assets and liabilities of the person
 - iv. Public Health Inspection Report with recommendations from the Medical Officer of Health of the area where the institution is to be registered.
- 2.4 A report shall be submitted within one year of the submission of the application by a committee consisting of the Elder Rights Promotion Officer, Social Service Officer (Provincial Council) and Grama Niladhari, by monitoring the implementation of the orders for the elder homes by the particular elder care home every quarter. The applicant shall be required to implement the recommendations provided in the supervision report, prior to the next site supervision, which is mandatory.
- 2.5 Registration will be granted one year after evaluating the recommendations of the final monitoring report and other necessary documents.
- 2.6 Institutions that do not comply with the recommendations of the National Secretariat for Elders, will not be registered and will be referred to legal action in accordance with the Protection of the Rights of Elders Act.
- 2.7 Currently registered elder care centres are monitored in accordance with these elder care centre orders, and a grace period of six months shall be granted to comply with such orders. If the orders are not complied with, within the grace period, the registration will be cancelled, and legal actions will be taken in accordance with the Protection of the Rights of Elders Act.
- 2.8 All elder care centres that are not currently registered with the National Secretariat for Elders should obtain the relevant registration within 6 months, and the basic requirements of the orders and guidelines should be met within those 6 months. A minimum grace period of one year will be given for new building construction or renovations. Legal action will be taken in accordance with the Protection of the Rights of Elders Act, against the elder care centres that do not comply with the basic requirements of the orders and guidelines.
- 2.9 An acceptable certificate shall be issued by the National Secretariat for Elders for the registration of elder care centres compliance with the above orders and guidelines.

3. Orders on Lands

- 3.1 When constructing an elder care centre in a rural area, the minimum land area should be half an acre (80 perches) or more.

- 3.2 When constructing an elder care centre in a semi-urban or urban area, the minimum extent should be 20 perches. (Factors such as the extent of space allocated per elder should be considered depending on the number of elders living in a home in an urban area.)
- 3.3 If elder care centres are operated on a lease basis, the lease period should be extended to 30 years.
- 3.4 A 25% of the total land or an area recommended and approved by a relevant authority should be reserved for outdoor activities.
- 3.5 A system should be in place for waste management in accordance with the updated environmental regulations.
- 3.6 An easy system should be made to take immediate action in the event of a disaster (to be able to quickly evacuate the elders from the elder care centre).

4. Building and Surrounding Area

4.1. Orders on Building and Surrounding Area

- 4.1.1 The name, address, registration number and registration certificate of the elder care centre should be displayed
- 4.1.2 A name board for the elder care centre should be displayed in a visible manner.
- 4.1.3 The elder care centre should be surrounded by a fence or wall with a gate that can be locked.
- 4.1.4 All buildings and the surroundings of the elder care centre should be maintained in a clean and safe condition, ensuring a peaceful environment free from hazards.

4.2 Guidelines for Buildings and Surrounding Area

- 4.2.1 A plan indicating each location of the elder care centre should be displayed.
- 4.2.2 That place should be easily accessible to the city, bus station, and hospital.
- 4.2.3 There should be an easy access road to the elder care centre.
- 4.2.4 Each section should be separated to facilitate the activities of the institution (Eg; bedrooms, dining rooms, kitchen, common room for visitors, store rooms, toilets, sick rooms, etc.)
- 4.2.5 Garden decorations should not be a disturbance for the elder to move around and engage in activities on the grounds.
- 4.2.6 Every place in the institution should be well-lit and ventilated.
- 4.2.7 There should be a non-slippery, non-cracked floor.
- 4.2.8 The garden and the buildings should be maintained beautifully as a conducive environment to prevent the breeding of pests.
- 4.2.9 The locks on the doors and windows of the buildings should be made so that they can be used by an elder.

4.2.10 Broken parts of the buildings should be repaired and restored as soon as possible

5. Orders on Accessibility

Accessibility Orders, as amended by the Persons with Disabilities (Orders) No. 01 of 2006 dated 17.10.2006, are applicable.

6. Bedrooms

6.1 Orders for Bedrooms

- 6.1.1 The minimum area of a room for one person should be 8 x 8 feet. The area should increase proportionately as the number of people in a room increases.
- 6.1.2 If more than one elderly person is accommodated in a single room, the sleeping area should be designed so that a minimum space of 6 × 6 feet is allocated per person.
- 6.1.3 The dormitory or hall used as a sleeping area should provide a minimum space of 6 × 6 feet per person, and the maximum number of elderly persons should be limited to 20.
- 6.1.4 Each room should be provided only with essential items such as a bed, mattress, pillow and a locker, etc., and unnecessary furniture should not be kept in the room by limiting the space.

6.2. Guidelines for Bedrooms

- 6.2.1 The bedroom should be kept clean and tidy.
- 6.2.2 Windows should be properly installed to provide adequate ventilation and light.
- 6.2.3 Light switches for electric lights should be easily accessible and secure.
- 6.2.4 The bed should be at a comfortable height to enable the elder to get in and get down easily.
- 6.2.5 The telephone should be easily accessible.
- 6.2.6 A device (Eg; a bell) should be easily accessible and near the bed to notify others in an emergency.

7. Dining Room

7.1. Orders for the Dining Room

- 7.1.1 The dining room should be designed according to the number of residents living in the elder care centre, and there should be adequate seating space for eating. There should be a minimum of 3x3 feet per person.
- 7.1.2 There should be several water taps and sinks in one place in the dining room for elders to wash their hands and dishes, and there should be facilities with disinfectants used for hand washing.
- 7.1.3 The dining room should be kept clean and free from flies and other insects.

7.2 Guidelines for the Dining Room

- 7.2.1 Round or square tables should be kept to enable one for every four elders.

7.2.2 Plates, cups, spoons, forks, knives, etc., should be separately and hygienically packed for each resident elder to enable them to clean those easily.

7.2.3 After having meals, leftover food and other waste should be properly disposed.

7.2.4 The floor of the dining room should be kept clean and dry

8. Common Room

8.1 Orders for the Common Room

8.1.1 A common room should be set up for resident elders.

8.2 Guidelines for the Common Room

8.2.1 When resident elders need to meet with visitors, the common room should be used for that purpose.

8.2.2 Elderly residents should be provided with facilities to engage in various activities according to their interests, such as reading newspapers, books, watching television and listening to the radio daily.

9. Bathrooms

9.1 Orders for Bathrooms

9.1.1 The bathroom should have a minimum area of 6x6 feet. It should be able to accommodate wheelchairs and trolleys when necessary.

9.1.2 The surface should be kept dry at all times by regular cleaning without water.

9.1.3 Water taps, water basins, water tanks, bath tubs, etc., should be made to be used easily by the elders.

9.1.4 The door should be made to enable wheelchairs and trolleys to be taken to the bathroom.

9.1.5 The bathroom should be cleaned regularly, daily, using disinfectants.

9.2 Guidelines for the Bathrooms

9.2.1 The bathroom should be designed to drain water properly.

9.2.2 The bathroom should be designed to be well-lit.

9.2.3 Wash basins should be positioned at a height that is easily accessible to the elders.

9.2.4 When using hot water for bathing, the temperature of the water heater should be set to 120 °F (49 °C) or lower to prevent scalding.

9.2.5 Bathroom facilities should be designed to protect the privacy of the elders.

10. Toilets

10.1 Orders for Toilets

- 10.1.1 There should be at least one toilet for every four people.
- 10.1.2 Toilets should be separated for men and women.
- 10.1.3 There should be attached bathroom facilities for the elderly with identified special needs.
- 10.1.4 Toilets should be cleaned regularly and kept hygienically using disinfectants.
- 10.1.5 The floor should be kept as dry and non-slippery.
- 10.1.6 Toilets should be designed with space to allow wheelchairs to turn around.
- 10.1.7 Waste management should be arranged in accordance with the prescribed standards and proper hygiene procedures.

10.2 Guidelines for the Toilets

- 10.2.1 The wall supports should be strong enough to bear the weight of the elders.
- 10.2.2 A toilet should be located near the bedroom to enable them to use it at night time.
- 10.2.3 It should be built well-lit and ventilated.
- 10.2.4 The tiles used for the toilet should be securely laid without cracks.
- 10.2.5 Drainage systems should be constructed to drain water properly.
- 10.2.6 The light switch should be arranged at the hand level of the elderly resident.
- 10.2.7 The commode or commode chair should be arranged so that the elders can use it easily.

11. Kitchen

11.1 Orders for the Kitchen

- 11.1.1 There should be a kitchen that is well-ventilated and lighted, and that is adequately equipped for residents and staff.
- 11.1.2 Food should be cooked safely, and cooked food should be kept safe until consumed.
- 11.1.3 Uncooked food, vegetables, fruits, etc., should be stored in a refrigerator in a well-ventilated manner.

- 11.1.4 Items such as uncooked meat should be properly stored in a refrigerator or appropriate storage facility, according to the required temperature conditions.
- 11.1.5 The drains, walls and floors of the kitchen and food service areas should be kept well-cleaned.
- 11.1.6 It should be mandatory to keep the kitchen free of pests.
- 11.1.7 Food handlers and servers should always follow health and safety practices and undergo proper health checks regularly.

11.2 Guidelines for the Kitchen

- 11.2.1 Any medium, such as firewood, kerosene oil, gas, electricity, etc., should be arranged in a way that can be used safely.
- 11.2.2 Entry of outsiders into the kitchen, except for the relevant staff, should be restricted as much as possible.
- 11.2.3 Clean water should be used regularly for cooking.
- 11.2.4 A good water supply with a sink and water pipes should be provided for kitchen usage.
- 11.2.5 There should be sufficient shelves and cupboards in the kitchen for storage of goods according to the existing needs.
- 11.2.6 The equipment and utensils used in the kitchen should be kept clean in a proper manner.
- 11.2.7 Food handlers and servers should stay away from kitchen work if they are suffering from contagious diseases.
- 11.2.8 It should always be ensured that all kitchen appliances are in good working order and free from hazards.
- 11.2.9 Frequently used appliances should be placed in an easily accessible location.
- 11.2.10 Precautions shall be taken to prevent accidents that may occur in the kitchen, and to maintain a safe, accident-free environment.

12. Storage Room for Storing Food Items

12.1 Orders for the Storage Room for Storing Food Items

- 12.1.1 The storage room should be arranged adjacent to the kitchen.
- 12.1.2 This should also be used for storing dry food.
- 12.1.3 There should be a suitable arrangement to protect food from pests and various insects.

12.1.4 Cooked food should not be stored together with uncooked food.

12.2 Guidelines for Storage Room for Storing Food Items

12.2.1 There should be adequate lighting and ventilation to maintain the quality of food items.

13. Office Room

13.1 Orders for Office Room

13.1.1 There should be an office room for operating office work.

13.2 Guidelines for the Office Room

13.2.1 There should be a table and a chair for office use and several chairs for visitors.

13.2.2 There should be equipment such as shelves, cupboards, etc., for keeping document files. They should be kept in a systematic and orderly manner.

13.2.3 The office should be maintained in a pleasant manner.

14. Sick Room

14.1 Orders for the Sick Room

14.1.1 There should be a sick room for residents to use in case of sudden illness.

14.1.2 There should be room facilities for isolating patients in case of infectious diseases.

14.1.3 There should be essential equipment such as a sick bed, saline bottle holder, trolley, chair, table, small shelf, wheelchair, and walking stick in the sick room.

14.2 Guidelines for the Sick Room

14.2.1 A first aid kit and essential medical supplies should be made available.

15. Places of Medical Facilities and Nursing Services

15.1 Orders for places where medical facilities and nursing services are provided

15.1.1 Medical and nursing service providers shall possess the required approved qualifications.

15.1.2 There should be a suitable place with the minimum facilities required for doctors and nurses.

15.1.3 A proper system should be in place to dispose of clinical waste.

15.2. Guidelines for Places of Medical Facilities and Nursing Services

15.2.1 The medication and medical records of the resident elders should be kept neat and clean.

15.2.2 A water supply with a sink should be provided.

15.2.3 Essential basic medical equipment shall be provided for medical officers.

16. Office Room/ Rest Room

16.1 Orders for an Office Room/ Rest Room

16.1.1 There should be a restroom with basic facilities for those working on a shift basis.

16.2 Guidelines for an Office Room/ Rest Room

16.2.1 There should be a suitable office room with facilities for the Officer in charge

16.2.2 If there are residential employees, the necessary facilities should be provided for them.

17. Creating an elder-friendly and safe environment in and around Elder Care Centres

17.1 Orders for creating an elder-friendly and safe environment in and around Elder Care Centres

17.1.1 The elder care centre and its surrounding environment shall be maintained as a safe and hazard-free area for elderly people.

17.1.2 Where swimming pools are used within elder care centres, they shall be maintained as safe, hazard-free areas ensuring proper safety standards, and suitably trained life-saving personnel shall be deployed.

17.1.3 At least one staff member trained in first aid shall be available within the staff of the elderly care centre.

17.2 Guidelines for creating an Elder-friendly and safe environment in and around Elder Care Centres

17.2.1 If staircases are used in elder care centres, they shall be constructed and maintained safely in accordance with approved standards.

17.2.2 Non-slip mats or coverings shall be used to ensure the safety of elderly people.

17.2.3 Adequate lighting shall be provided within elder care centre during nighttime hours.

18. For Food and Nutrition

18.1 Orders for Food and Nutrition

- 18.1.1 Food menus should be prepared in accordance with food guidelines and nutritional standards.
- 18.1.2 Meals should be prepared using appropriate methods according to the nutritional needs of bedridden and special health-conditioned elders as recommended by medical professionals, and should be prepared by a person with appropriate training and knowledge to provide such meals to elders.

18.2 Guidelines for Food and Nutrition

- 18.2.1 Donors should be made aware to prepare and serve meals provided by them in a manner that complies with nutritional standards.

19. Facilities and Residential Welfare provided for the Elder

19.1 Orders for Facilities and Residential Welfare provided for the Elder

- 19.1.1 Arrangements should be made to establish relationships between the elderly residents, their relatives and friends.
- 19.1.2 Children, siblings and other relatives of the elderly residents should be provided with opportunities to visit and meet them whenever necessary.
- 19.1.3 Opportunities should be provided for groups or individuals to come for study, research and training with the permission of the National Secretariat for Elders.
- 19.1.4 There should be an appropriate arrangement to provide transportation facilities for the sick elders.

19.2 Guidelines for Facilities and Residential Welfare provided for the elder

- 19.2.1 All services provided to elderly people shall be delivered in a manner that ensures privacy and the protection of their dignity.
- 19.2.2 Whenever possible, resident elderly people should be given the opportunity to maintain contact and interact with their relatives and friends during special occasions.
- 19.2.3 The opportunity should be provided to join with the elders in the village during festivals and on other occasions.
- 19.2.4 The necessary counselling services should be provided for the elders.
- 19.2.5 A place should be set up for the elders to engage in their religious rituals for their mental concentration.

19.2.6 The resident elders should be involved in religious and recreational trips annually to help them prevent a monotonous living environment.

19.2.7 Programmes such as religious movements, meditation, religious services, etc., should be organised.

19.2.8 Space should be provided for indoor activities such as chess, *dam*, carrom, etc.

19.2.9 Residential elders should be given opportunities to engage in production activities and to sell those products according to their capabilities.

19.2.10 A suitable place and facilities should be provided to read books/newspapers, etc.

20. Documents to be Maintained by the Elder Care Centre

20.1 Orders on the documents to be maintained by the Elder Care Centre

20.1.1 The Elder Care Centre should maintain the following documents in a systematic and up-to-date manner.

- i. Personal Files of the Residents
- ii. Admissions Register
- iii. Cash Book with Bank Accounts
- iv. Petty Cash Book
- v. General Ledger
- vi. Cheque Book
- vii. Inventory Book
- viii. Movement Register
- ix. Visitors Register
- x. Register of the Dead
- xi. Medical Records
- xii. Donation Book
- xiii. Log Book
- xiv. Membership Register
- xv. Receipt Books
- xvi. Register of Assets
- xvii. Book containing minutes of Committee Meetings and Annual General Meetings
- xviii. Files containing basic information about the elderly people receiving residential care in the institution
- xix. Record containing staff details
- xx. Files containing relevant Acts and Orders issued by the National Secretariat for Elders

20.1.2 Authorised government officers should be allowed to examine, monitor and inspect the elder care centre and necessary records at any time, as necessary in accordance with the Act.

21. Orders For Nursing Homes

21.1 As elder care centres provide institutional care for elders, registration with the National Secretariat for Elders is mandatory.

21.2 Qualified medical officers and nursing staff with the required professional qualifications shall be available to carry out health-related services.

21.3 Services should be obtained from qualified, properly trained caregivers.

21.4 Relevant medical professionals should be registered with the recognised Medical Council of Sri Lanka.

21.5 There should be a service agreement.

21.6 In the event of failure to provide services in accordance with the service agreement, appropriate legal action shall be taken.

21.7 Authorised officers of the National Secretariat for Elders shall be given access to inspect and provide necessary guidance to the nursing home.

21.8 A proper mechanism shall be in place for the refund of deposits paid by residents when they leave the nursing home.

21.9 All the orders and guidelines issued for elder care centres, sections 01–22 herein, shall be strictly adhered to.

22. Administration and Human Resource Management of Elder Care Centres

22.1 Orders for the Administration and Human Resource Management of Elder Care Centres

22.1.1 Elder care centres shall have a governing board/council/management committee.

22.1.2 A Centre Manager position (Male/ Female) shall be established.

22.1.3 There shall be a staff with the required qualifications.

22.1.4 A sufficient number of qualified and trained staff shall be available to care for elderly people.

22.1.5 Elder harassment and abuse shall be prevented through proper administrative supervision within the elder care centre. In the event of such occurrences, appropriate legal action shall be taken.

22.1.6 Services and facilities shall be provided in a manner that respects the dignity of elderly people.

22.1.7 Institutions that publish misleading information in promotional activities shall have their credibility revoked, and legal action shall be taken.

22.1.8 Fees charged for services shall be justifiable in relation to the services provided.

22.1.9 Any form of illegal or unfair collection of money shall be prohibited.

22.2 Guidelines for Administration and Human Resource Management of Elder Care Centres

22.2.1 There shall be at least one care worker for every seven elderly residents; however, this ratio may vary depending on the health condition of the residents.

22.2.2 The Centre Administration shall pay attention to the conduct and well-being of service providers.

22.2.3 Adequate staff shall be deployed to ensure 24-hour care and protection for elderly residents.