

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ALONE LAUNCHES ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN, URGES PUBLIC TO CHECK ON THEIR OLDER NEIGHBOURS

Charity stresses the need to address loneliness and isolation among older people during the Christmas period

Dublin, December 7th 2009 ALONE, at the launch of their Christmas campaign today, reiterated that loneliness and isolation among older people can result in debilitating circumstances for those most at risk, particularly during the Christmas period. The charity called on members of the public to be mindful of their older neighbours, family and friends who live alone, and to ensure that they visit them frequently. Regular checks can result in a drastically improved quality of life for older people who may require support. Depression, poor nutrition, inadequate heating, and unsatisfactory living conditions among older people can all be attributed to isolation. With the onset of winter weather conditions, older people living alone can find it more difficult to get out of the house to conduct a daily routine. A five minute visit to check on heating levels, food consumption, adequate security, and to simply offer some human contact can have a profound effect.

"The Christmas period, while seen by many as a time for celebration, can be the darkest time of the year for many older people at the heart of our community. While ALONE combats isolation and loneliness among older people through the work of our dedicated volunteers and staff, we call on all members of the community to remember their older neighbours living alone, and to consider their needs," commented Sean Moynihan, CEO of ALONE. He continued, "Our organisation has been working for over 30 years to support older people who may require our services, but our overall message is a direct one to the public - check on your older neighbour. Don't leave it to others, they may have left it to you. This message is applicable all year round, but even more so at Christmas time, when older people can suffer more acutely."

ALONE volunteers often experience vulnerable older people in severe situations as a direct result of isolation. They may have limited mobility and be unable to shop for groceries, or be suffering financial hardship and finding it difficult to purchase enough fuel to keep adequately warm - hypothermia can be a real and present threat. Volunteers have experienced older people living in crippling fear of crime. 90 year old Rose from Dublin 7, who has been befriended by an ALONE volunteer, commented at the launch of the campaign, "I only get home help for one hour a week, so the ALONE volunteer visit means a lot. Sometimes you get used to being a loner and don't want to mix, but that doesn't mean you don't like seeing people when they call. I have a good neighbour who calls in to me, that is important when you have no family near. It is very important to check on older people who live near you and to check if they need some shopping."

Established in 1977, ALONE provides a vital befriending service to older people, but also crucially provides affordable permanent and temporary housing for older people in need. The charity provides a high quality and supportive housing service to facilitate and promote independent living. ALONE has over 85 volunteers who offer a befriending service to older people in communities. ALONE does not receive any ongoing state funding, it is through the donations from members of the public that the organisation can carry out its essential activities. The organisation is based in Willie Bermingham Place, a housing project in Kilmainham named after the founder of the organisation.

ALONE can be contacted on (01) 679 1032 for advice and assistance. They can also provide information to concerned members of the public, or older people directly, about services that are available to support those who are vulnerable.

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