

Call for Specific Policies for Older Persons

ALONE CALLS ON POLITICAL PARTIES TO PRODUCE TRANSPARENT AND SPECIFIC POLICIES ON OLDER PERSONS

Charity encourages voters to question canvassing politicians on their policies for older persons

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ALONE, the charity which combats isolation, loneliness and homelessness among vulnerable older persons has today called on all political parties, and independents, to produce clear policies on the protection of vulnerable older persons in advance of the General Election.

With 17% of those voting in the General Election aged over 65, and with a traditionally high turnout of voters in this age group, ALONE is concerned that the needs of vulnerable older persons are being sidelined in the debates leading up to election day. The charity is appealing to politicians to ensure that the most vulnerable in society are not ignored, and urges them to present a specific vision for the protection of older persons, and to produce a plan and a budget to ensure that this vision can be achieved.

Commented Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE, "It is essential that those seeking election take the needs of the most vulnerable in society into account, and we call on all those seeking election to explain clear, specific policies in relation to older persons. By not having specific policies, politicians are, in fact, adding to the existing stress being felt by older persons who are already struggling. In our experience, we find that lack of certainty is a huge concern to the older people we work with. When there are no specific policies, rights, or guarantees in place, many older persons have expressed to us their grave concerns about their independence in relation to their income and ability to remain in their own home."

The charity, through its daily work with vulnerable older persons, has had serious concerns expressed to them in relation to "the basics in life", including the cost of food, shelter, healthcare and fuel. A recent consumer price index from the CSO showed that the annual inflation rate in December 2010 had doubled from the previous month, with the costs of energy, food, and health insurance rising significantly.

ALONE is calling on politicians to urgently address this critical issue and to announce their intention to do so in advance of the General Election.

Provision by the State of home help and home care facilities to vulnerable older persons are seen as crucial priorities by ALONE. These services allow older persons to remain in their own home, and allows them to age with dignity. ALONE continues to call for strict regulation of these services. For the people ALONE work with, services are of equal importance to income.

Speaking about the unrelenting isolation of older persons, Seán Moynihan continued, “On a day-to-day basis we encounter increasingly challenging cases of neglect of vulnerable older persons, a situation which has not changed much since the foundation of ALONE over 30 years ago. Vulnerable older persons were on the fringes of society when our organisation was set-up, they remained so during the decade of economic growth, and are now disproportionately affected as a result of the downturn. We have very serious concerns about the ongoing welfare of vulnerable older persons in the State, and these concerns are heightened by the lack of clear, policies from any political party relating to older persons.”

The organisation welcomes the fact that a National Positive Ageing Strategy was in the process of being produced by the outgoing Government, and calls on the incoming Government to publish the document immediately so that the findings can be finalised and implemented as a matter of priority. “We also need to ensure that older persons have a voice in the next Government, and we’re appealing for the retention of a Minister for Older Persons to ensure implementation of forthcoming strategies,” said Moynihan.

ALONE is urging all voters, not only older persons, to challenge their local politicians on their exact policies for older persons, and to consider this when casting their vote. The charity encourages voters to ask one simple question of politicians: “What is your party’s policy on caring for vulnerable older people?”.

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