

50% Increase in Calls for Support

Calls to ALONE jumped between July – December 2010, charity processed over 1,300 requests for help, increase in volunteer numbers required to cope with demand.

(To download this release as a pdf click here [50% increase in calls for support and assistance.pdf](#))

Friday, 28th January 2011

ALONE, the charity which supports vulnerable older persons, today announced that it recorded a significant increase in calls for support in the second half of 2010. The charity processed over 1,000 calls during November and December alone, primarily as a result of the cold snap, representing a 50% increase in calls in comparison with July 2010. Over 400 e-mails requesting assistance and advice were also received by the charity during November and December. During these two months, ALONE's Community Response Unit responded to 16 calls for crisis interventions, where an individual's health or safety was immediately at risk, including demand for food, fuel, and assistance with access to medication during the cold snap. Meals and fuel were distributed to those most in need during the cold snap and Christmas period.

ALONE launched an emergency response number on December 1st – this number was in operation throughout the Christmas period to respond to crisis calls from 8:30am to 8:00 pm from the 15th of December to 4th of January. The charity's befriending service, in existence to combat isolation, is now so in demand that the charity is seeking to increase its volunteer numbers by 25% (from 120 to 150) in 2011 to cope with the level of need. The charity currently provides a befriending service to over 190 older persons. All new volunteers will receive core training and will be Garda vetted. The training provided for volunteers includes issues such as Elder Abuse Sensitivity, Dealing with Alzheimers, Ageism and Positive Ageing. Loneliness and isolation continue to be a crucial issue for a significant minority of older persons, and ALONE maintains a concerted level of activity to combat this.

“While a certain percentage of the increase in calls can be solely attributed to the cold snap, we have been recording a significant increase in demand for our services on a monthly basis during 2010,” commented Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE. “Our minimal resources were substantially stretched during the winter period, with our volunteers and staff, with public support, pulling out all the stops to ensure that all calls were answered, appropriate advice and support was being dispensed, and most crucially, that requests for crisis interventions were addressed. We unfortunately continued to discover some vulnerable older persons in distress, with several of our crisis interventions coming across individuals with no running water, no heat or fuel in their residence, and some incidences where emergency housing was required due to inappropriate shelter.”

He continued, "It's important at this time to recognise the incredible efforts of our staff and volunteers in recent weeks, and to thank them for their commitment and dedication. We're increasing our number of volunteers in 2011, to ensure that we can continue to provide the best service possible to those who call us for support, and we hope to be in a position whereby our budget will allow us to provide this service. We receive no Government funding for our day-to-day service provision, and we would like to thank members of the public who continue to support us."

ALONE now deals with over 200 calls on average per month, and maintains over 90 residences across the city which house older persons. The charity has concerns that the impact of the recent budget will have a negative effect on donations from the public.

The organisation also organises social outings and holidays, arranges for domestic maintenance and upkeep for those who require it, and acts in an advocacy capacity for those who require assistance with their entitlements, or need intervention with a service provider such as an energy provider.

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.

ENDS

For further information please contact Glenn Hogarty, Limelight Communications, on (01) 668 0600 or 087 790 9670

NOTE TO EDITOR:

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 100 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.