

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ALONE PREPARES TO MARK THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF DEATH OF ITS FOUNDING MEMBER, WILLIE BERMINGHAM

Charity will host a special symposium on ageing on May 6th in Dublin, other events to be announced

Dublin, March 18th 2010 ALONE today announced details of initiatives and activities over the coming months that will mark the 20th anniversary of the death of the organisations founding member, Willie Bermingham. These initiatives include a Symposium on Ageing which will be held in Dublin on May 6th with the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Emer Costello in attendance. The symposium will feature high-profile speakers on pertinent issues affecting older persons, and will address the challenges faced by the organisation in continuing to carry out the work of Willie Bermingham.

Members of the Bermingham family will hold a private memorial service for Willie on April 23rd, the date of the anniversary. The service will be held in the Fire Brigade Training Centre, and dignitaries, family members, and colleagues of Willie are being invited to attend what will be a celebration of Willie's extraordinary life and his remarkable achievements.

Willie Bermingham Junior, one of Willie Senior's five children, carries on his father's legacy as a Dublin fireman. "My father was an inspiration to us all, his entire family, and many members of the Dublin public who supported his work during the early years of ALONE and beyond. It's difficult to believe that it's been twenty years since his passing, and we really hope to remember his life and achievements, and celebrate them, during this anniversary year. We're looking forward to seeing old friends at the service and telling stories about my father – there are many stories to tell. We're also looking forward to having a permanent memorial to my father in the Fire Brigade Training Centre, where several of his awards and honours will be mounted – he was the most celebrated Dublin fireman ever," said Willie Bermingham Jr.

Willie Bermingham was a household name in Dublin in the 1970s – as Dublin's most celebrated fireman, he brought the plight of vulnerable older persons living alone into the public eye. During the course of his work, Willie was moved and enraged by the circumstances in which he found many forgotten older people living. In late 1976, within a few weeks of each other, eight older people were found dead in their Dublin homes – Willie was appalled by this, and began a campaign to raise awareness about vulnerable older people living alone. In 1977, the organisation ALONE was founded to combat loneliness and isolation among older persons.

Over the years since the organisation was established, thousands of Dubliners have lent their support and their time to ALONE, becoming part of a constantly growing and developing organisation. Willie's family, friends, and colleagues within the Dublin fire service all selflessly volunteered their time to the organisation, and this spirit of volunteerism continues to thrive today in the charity, with almost 90 volunteers currently engaged with ALONE. It is the dedication of the volunteers and a small staff that continues Willie's legacy and spirit. The organisation continues to this day to work on behalf of forgotten older people, offering housing, support, advice, assistance, and of course, a vital befriending service.

Sean Moynihan, CEO of ALONE commented "It's so important that we mark the 20th anniversary of the passing of Willie Bermingham in a fitting way, and we believe that events such as the upcoming symposium on ageing will remind the public of the legacy of Willie himself, and also of the necessity for ongoing support for our vital work in the community. We're looking forward to announcing details of the symposium in the coming weeks."

The charity does not receive any ongoing state funding, it functions directly as a result of donations from members of the public. The organisation is based in Willie Bermingham Place, a housing project for older persons in Kilmainham named after the organisation's founder. 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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