

Call to End Uncertainty With Specific Plan

ALONE CALLS ON FINE GAEL AND LABOUR TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC PROVISIONS FOR THE WELFARE OF VULNERABLE OLDER PERSONS IN NEGOTIATIONS ON PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT

Charity warns of dangers facing vulnerable older persons who are suffering as a result of uncertainty about their future

(To download this release as a pdf click here [Call to End Uncertainty.pdf](#))

Friday March 4, 2011

ALONE, the charity which combats isolation, loneliness and homelessness among vulnerable older persons has demanded that the new Programme for Government which is currently being negotiated between Fine Gael and Labour should include specific provisions for the welfare of vulnerable older persons in the community. ALONE is calling on incoming Taoiseach Enda Kenny to make good on his pledge to make Ireland “the best place on earth where people could age with dignity”. The organisation is calling for a visionary approach to protecting vulnerable older persons, who it says have been isolated throughout the economic boom, and are disproportionately affected now during the downturn.

ALONE is calling for specific policies in certain areas which it sees as critical to the wellbeing of vulnerable older persons;

- Consistency in the provision of home help and care support to allow people to age with dignity in their own home;
- The retention of a Minister for Older Persons to ensure a voice for this group in the Dáil;
- Immediate publication and implementation of the National Strategy on Positive Ageing

ALONE, which provides permanent housing to over 90 vulnerable older persons, and provide practical support to many more living in their own homes, welcomes Enda Kenny’s vocal commitment to older persons, and looks forward to engaging with the incoming Government in this regard. ALONE will be seeking a meeting with the appropriate Minister as soon as the new cabinet is announced, and will be stressing the need to address the numerous challenges that face vulnerable older persons on a daily basis.

Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE, said “We need to take this opportunity to secure the rights of vulnerable older persons, and to ensure that they are not sidelined in any Programme for Government which is to be implemented over a long term period. We are aware that both Fine Gael and Labour have commitments to the protection of older persons, but they are, in our opinion, too vague and general, and there is a need for specific policies. We are

calling on the parties involved, in the strongest terms, to ensure significant consideration is taken of vulnerable older persons in any plan.”

ALONE has particular concerns for the provision of home help and home care facilities by the government to vulnerable older persons. “Any cut or alteration to these services will have hugely detrimental effects,” said Moynihan. “It is vital that these services are applied on a consistent basis, taking into account individual circumstances of those most in need. We want to ensure that all older people have an equal right to these services.” The charity has also pointed out that these services are crucial to allow people to age with dignity in their own home, and they have repeated their call for urgent and strict regulation of these services.

Speaking on the issue of the National Positive Ageing strategy, which was being developed by the outgoing government Moynihan said “ALONE is calling for the publication of this strategy as soon as the new government is formed. We are also calling for a short process of engagement with representative organisations to ensure that the strategy is specific and as far-reaching and forward looking as our service users need it to be. By keeping this strategy under-wraps, politicians are adding to the existing stress being felt by vulnerable older persons. We urge Fine Gael and Labour to include a provision for the retention of a Minister for Older Persons in their Programme for Government, to oversee the implementation of this strategy.”

He continued, “We are witnessing on a day-to-day basis from the people we work with a genuine concern for their own wellbeing, which is leading to an unhealthy uncertainty. It’s our duty, on their behalf, to demand that any new Programme for Government which is being negotiated will take these people into account, value them as citizens, and ensure their independence and protection as we move into more difficult times. The people we work with don’t have unreasonable demands, their concerns are for the basics in life. There was little reference made to vulnerable older persons during the course of the Election campaign, and we feel that now is the time to highlight these issues, and demand that they are taken into account in the long term.”

The organisation is currently engaged in a high-impact billboard campaign to raise awareness among the public of key issues affecting vulnerable older persons. This campaign also highlights the range of services the charity provides, including housing, a vital befriending service, and practical supports within the community.

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.

ALONE can be contacted on (01) 679 1032 for those who have concerns about their own wellbeing, or the wellbeing of a vulnerable older person in the community.

ENDS

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