

Increase in Demand for ALONE Services

ALONE ANNOUNCES SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN DEMAND FROM VULNERABLE OLDER PERSONS FOR ITS SERVICES

Charity sees requests for direct assistance rise while public donations drop

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Dublin, September 1st 2010

ALONE today announced that it has seen a significant increase in demand for their services from vulnerable older persons. The charity is now a central point of contact for many older persons who are in need of assistance to deal with isolation, housing, or day-to-day issues that can affect some older persons so acutely. The services most in demand from the organisation include assistance with housing difficulties and maintenance issues which continue to cause hardship to numerous people. Requests for assistance in these matters have increased significantly, to over 25 per month, an increase of 150%.

Loneliness and isolation continue to be a huge factor in the lives of a significant minority of older persons, and ALONE combats this through its befriending programme, which has also seen an increase in demand this year – there are now 35 isolated older persons on a waiting list for befriending visits.

ALONE is now dealing with almost 200 telephone calls per month, along with maintaining over 90 residences across the city which house older persons. 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.

Recognising that the trend is continuously increasing for demand in services, the organisation is taking a pro-active approach to ensuring that its staff and volunteers are fully prepared and trained for their duties. ALONE has commenced a thorough programme to ensure full and appropriate training for those dealing with older persons. These training courses are provided by accredited trainers, and include issues such as Elder Abuse Sensitivity, Dealing with Alzheimers, Ageism and Positive Ageing. While donations from the public have dropped dramatically this year, the organisation has been the beneficiary of very welcome donations from the Health Services Staff Credit Union, and more recently from the Bank of Ireland Life Corporate Responsibility Scheme, 'The Give Together Initiative'.

CEO of ALONE, Seán Moynihan, noted that “While resources continue to be an ongoing issue and concern for ALONE, we are determined to maintain our level of service to all those in need of it, and are intent on pushing ahead with a training programme to ensure that our staff and numerous volunteers are in possession of the best skills to deal with the difficult situations they can often face. We have called for a mandatory level of training for all professionals working with older persons in Ireland, as such a requirement exists for those working with children. We are working towards ensuring that all involved with ALONE will have a sufficient level of training, and are focused on this goal to ensure we’re offering the best possible services. We operate with a very small and dedicated staff, and a large, enthusiastic group of volunteers who are becoming more and more stretched in the face of such an overwhelming demand for our services. It is our intention to increase the number of volunteers we have, but we are currently faced with the challenge of trying to train new volunteers with limited resources.”

He continued, “We have a long waiting list of people wishing to volunteer for the organisation, but are unable to proceed with these applications due to the lack of resources available to us, and an increasingly tight funding situation. We receive no Government funding for our day-to-day service provision, so are hugely dependent on the goodwill of the public, who have been tremendously supportive during the lifetime of the charity. Of course, we remind the public that while donations are always welcome, we also urge them to spend some time checking on their older neighbours who may be isolated.”

ALONE is this year marking the 20th anniversary of the death of its founder, Willie Bermingham, and is undertaking a number of new initiatives aimed at increasing its services, including strategic partnerships with other organisations working in the field, and an active schools programme to promote awareness of the issues of vulnerable older persons in the heart of the community.

For further information on the services provided by ALONE, please contact their office, (01) 679 1032.

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