

STATEMENT FROM ALONE ON ANNOUNCEMENT OF REVIEW OF FAIR DEAL NURSING HOME SCHEME

Dublin, April 23, 2012 Following from today's announcement by Minister of State for Older People Kathleen Lynch TD that she intends to review the Fair Deal Nursing Home Scheme, older persons charity ALONE has broadly welcomed the review.

One of the services the charity provides is permanent housing for older people who would otherwise have been at risk of homelessness. ALONE have previously met with the Minister to outline the charity's cost-effective model of housing with support that currently provides homes to 100 older people in need. Demand for this service is currently running at 10 eligible applicants for every vacancy.

ALONE is fully supportive of the care in the community model, where home care provision is preferable to the long-term residential option for a majority of people in need of care provision.

CEO of ALONE Seán Moynihan stated, "We're glad to hear the announcement by Minister Lynch that she intends a review of the Fair Deal Nursing Home scheme, as our experience is proving to us that the current method of operation is quite simply inefficient, and not providing the service required. We're keen to see a speedy, thorough review, and to have positive changes implemented at the earliest possible stage. We at ALONE are particularly keen to see a greater shift towards supportive housing models in the community which maximise independence, and provide value for money. The cost of provision of nursing home care is extremely expensive, and we'd like to see some follow-through on the Minister for Health's repeated statements that care provision in people's own homes is the preferred option. It is also a significantly less expensive option."

He continued, "The vital thing is that home care packages and home help hours are fully supported by the government, and not cut. In January, it was proposed that home care hours would be reduced by an estimated 500,000 hours, which would have a significant impact on service provision. If the government is considering restructuring the Fair Deal scheme with a greater emphasis on home care, then an appropriate level of commitment must be made to the home care model."

"Our other concern," he concluded, "is that the current Fair Deal scheme is not being implemented as planned, in terms of how applicants are being assessed. It is our experience that the current Care Needs Assessment is used mainly to decide whether or not someone should be placed in long-term care. Where it is decided that their care needs might be better managed with a home care support package, this support is not available.

We call on both Minister Lynch and Minister Reilly to address this situation as a matter of urgency, and we hope that the review of the Fair Deal Scheme will result in a resolution of this unacceptable situation, with better training for assessment staff and consistency and equal access to services for all."

ALONE provides a befriending service, permanent housing, and an emergency community response service to older people in need. The charity is celebrating its 35th anniversary in 2012. Older people in need of assistance can contact ALONE on (01) 679 1032.

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