

ALONE responds to Minister Kathleen Lynch's appearance on RTE's Prime Time in relation to home care for older people

Charity calls for urgent legislation on standards in the home care sector and urges government to devise a strategic approach for ageing population

Dublin, May 25, 2012 ALONE has responded to last night's Prime Time programme on RTE where Minister Kathleen Lynch discussed the home care sector for older people. The charity is calling on the government to urgently introduce legislation on standards in the home care sector, and to devise a strategic approach for the ageing population. Last January the Law reform Commission called for the immediate introduction of statutory standards for the home care sector on the basis of the Health Act 2007 for Nursing Homes. ALONE supports this call and asks the government to act on it immediately. 65,000 people in Ireland are in receipt of home care services.

Commented Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE "It would be possible to quickly bring in statutory standards by amending existing legislation and extending the HIQA standards already developed for nursing homes. This would crucially bring in care organisations which are not subject to service level agreements with the HSE. The Minister said these measures are currently queued behind other legislation and has said that statutory standards will probably not be brought in until 2016. In light of the recommendations of the Law Commission and the poor standards of home care shown by the programme, ALONE call for this legislation immediately."

Highlighting the poor level of service provision in some areas of the home care sector, Moynihan commented "In the case of organisations subject to agreements with the HSE it appeared that there is often no auditing of service delivery. It was particularly shocking to see the programme report lack of service provision where funding remained unspent. This is in spite of the level of unmet demand for services in a climate of cut-backs. Minister Kathleen Lynch's insistence that the situation was much improved since the last Prime Time report on this issue 18 months ago, following which the government promised regulation, was in conflict with the evidence of last night's programme which highlighted poor quality services in the sector, as well as incidents of cruelty and neglect. There is also evidence of a low level of willingness among older people in receipt of these services to complain, a situation which is most probably exacerbated by a fear among people about services being withdrawn in cut-backs."

Speaking in relation to quality standards, Moynihan pointed out “ALONE has successfully achieved an internationally recognised quality standard for our services which have been certified by ISO. We urge all home care providers to strive to achieve recognised quality standards for their services.”

Yesterday’s release of Census 2011 Results by the CSO (Profile 2 Older and Younger) shows that the population of older people, aged 65 or over, increased by 14.4 per cent since 2006. The CSO projects that the number of over-65s will double by 2026 to 909,000. ALONE is calling on the government to live up to its promise to take a strategic approach to the ageing Irish population.

ALONE celebrates its 35th anniversary in 2012. ALONE provides assistance to older people in need of support, through a befriending service, permanent housing provision, and an emergency response service. Older people in need of support can contact ALONE on (01) 679 1032.

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