

STATEMENT IN RELATION TO MOBILITY ALLOWANCE SCHEME

Dublin October 25th 2012 ALONE, the charity which provides vital supports to the one in ten older people in need of assistance, has expressed astonishment at the statement from the Department of Health in relation to the illegal capping of the age limit for the mobility allowance scheme.

Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE, commented, "The statement from the Department of Health acknowledging that the capping of the age limit for the mobility allowance scheme is illegal is extraordinary. The fact that any Government department feels that it is above the fair application of the law is frightening. The provision of service and allowances must be based on equality and need, not on age. This must be applied across all sectors of the health service to ensure fairness and transparency for anyone going through hardship.

We work on the ground on a day-to-day basis with the one in ten older people who are in need of assistance. We find it astonishing that despite committing to remove the age limit of 66 last year, that this commitment has not been followed through. With this type of decision making, we would have concerns about how we can trust and be assured that other schemes won't be dealt with in a similar way, given declining home help and Fair Deal schemes. We know from our service users that mobility is a crucial element of wellbeing, and the lack of mobility can lead to even greater isolation.

ALONE understands the necessity for financial constraints but we call that all age groups are dealt with equally. Whatever the size of the budget or the amount of resources they should be shared among all age groups.

It is not for any department or individual to decide to exclude any sector of our society. The Government has a responsibility to ensure that it is at all times providing supports and health care to those who need them most.

For anyone going through hardship we all need to know that fairness transparency are at work. It is important that we all reflect as any one of us may be in need of allowances and health services in the future.

We fully support Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly. We agree with the Ombudsman that the current situation is unacceptable and we call on the Department to act immediately to ensure that they are complying with the law so that those in need of the mobility allowance scheme can access it."

ENDS