

# ALONE rejects claim that over 100,000 older people will apply for Mobility Allowance Scheme

February 27<sup>th</sup> 2013 : ALONE has expressed shock at the announcement by the government that the mobility allowance scheme is to be scrapped and replaced.

Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE, commented, “We’re hugely disappointed with the announcement of the replacement of this scheme which will continue to exclude older people in need. We’re demanding that the new scheme to be put in place will allow equal access to all sectors of society where a need has been assessed. A figure of between €170 – €300million has been quoted in order to allow access to the scheme to over 65s. We’re unclear as to how these figures were arrived at, as this would equate to approximately 100,000 older people applying for the scheme, which we completely reject. We work with hundreds of older people on a daily basis and are aware of only two or three people in receipt of this allowance.”

Noting the exclusion of older people eligible for mobility allowance, he commented that “The clear message is that the new scheme to come into place will intentionally exclude anyone over the age of 65 in need of this allowance, which we find remarkable and completely unacceptable. We must stress that we are not advocating that older people in need receive preferential treatment. Access to a mobility allowance should not be based on location, gender or age. The main goal is that the existing funds available for this scheme, which will not be reduced, should be available equally, based on need, to all sections of society. The government actually committed to removing the age limit of 66 in 2011, but is now completely reneging on this. 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.”

Concluding, he commented, “To have had the existing scheme illegally excluding over 65s for four years was a frightening revelation. To then have the Department of Health openly acknowledge that the scheme was being run illegally defied belief. We now have Minister Lynch commenting that in a review of the existing scheme, ‘every option we came up with’ was ‘considered to be illegal’. Apparently the way to tackle this is to have the State acknowledge that there are people over 65 in need of this scheme, but will enforce a replacement scheme whereby these people will be excluded from applying. What we’re hearing is that there is a slightly ageist agenda, and we’re calling on government to allow all those who are assessed as having a need, no matter what age, to have access to the scheme. The exclusion of any group is unacceptable.”

ALONE service users come from among the one in ten older people who are in need of support. We work with over 330 older people on a daily basis, providing a vital befriending service to combat isolation and loneliness, an emergency response service from trained professional staff dealing with 30 crisis interventions monthly,

and offers 100 homes with lifetime tenancies in a supportive environment for older people at risk of homelessness.