

# ALONE calls for urgent action on how to best support older people in need

June 6<sup>th</sup> 2013: ALONE has called on the government to urgently act on its approach for care of the small percentage of the ageing population who require home or nursing care.

This is in light of the publication of complaints by the HSE in relation to the provision of home help services, and the ongoing privatisation of home care and nursing care which the charity notes is a constant cause for concern among older people and their families. The charity believes that there is a portrayal of older people not contributing and not being affected by cuts. Current events have shown that there seems to be fragmentation and poor, yet expensive, services in the sector.

Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE commented, “This issue is about care and supporting people – it is not about age. It should be a human right to be provided with the correct standards of care, provided by trained staff within a system which is overseen, regulated and inspected by authorities. It is also vital that older people are included in the debate in terms of how services should best be provided for them – to date, these discussions are taking place as though older people are not in the room. Where care and compassion in later life are required, it should not be something that we need to ask for.”

The charity is calling on the sector and the government to ensure thorough, frequent inspections of services; a more effective approach to training; and overall regulation in order to ensure that older people in need of home help or nursing home care are receiving the best possible service. The charity strongly supports older people’s right to age well at home, and in many cases this can only be achieved through home help, with regulation of the sector vital.

He continued, “We’re fully supportive of the right of older people to age well at home and in the community with dignity. This should be a goal of society and government, but we’re continuously seeing barriers being put in place to this. Older people need to be included in this conversation as in a lot of cases they are paying for these services. We need to reduce the percentage of older people in nursing homes and create age friendly and cost effect models in the community.”

Highlighting the poor level of service provision in some areas of the home help sector, Moynihan commented “The publication of complaints to the HSE shows 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 made worse 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 recognized quality standard for our services which have been

certified by ISO. We urge all providers of home care and home help to strive to achieve recognized quality standards for their services.”

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 pragmatic approach to the ageing Irish population.

ALONE provides assistance to older people in need of support through a befriending service, permanent housing provision, an emergency response service and campaigns on issues affecting older people in need. Older people in need of support can contact ALONE on (01) 679 1032.