

April 17th 2014:

ALONE urges the public to check on potentially vulnerable older neighbours this Easter weekend

The Easter bank holiday weekend is a time for gatherings and family for most – but ALONE warns that many older people will see no one for the whole weekend. With many local shops, amenities, health and care services for older people closing for the duration of the long weekend, older people could be left in a vulnerable position. ALONE asks that members of the public make an effort to check in on their older neighbours who may be isolated this weekend with no one to turn to. To highlight the potential dangers that seclusion poses this weekend ALONE are drawing attention to one particular individuals story.

Case study

ALONE's Emergency Community Response team works to aid older people in crisis, recently an ALONE team responded to a call which directed them to a residence in South Dublin, inhabited by a 72 year old man named John.

Recalling the visit, an ALONE Community Response team member said, "When I went to see him he had not eaten in two days. He was too ill to go out for food and he had no one to turn to for help." John's only son lives abroad and he usually eats food delivered by 'Meals on Wheels'. Unfortunately this service does not operate on weekends and on this particular weekend John found himself housebound due to illness. With no one to turn to and no visitors to call on him, he had been surviving on sugar and water for two whole days before ALONE's Community Response team found him.

John's living conditions were extremely poor. There was no running water, central heating, fridge or cooking facilities in his house and John was wearing layers of clothes in an attempt to stay warm. Since the initial visit ALONE continues to work with John, helping to build a support network and improve his basic living standards. Currently, ALONE is working to upgrade John's home to help John become more self-sufficient. ALONE will continue working with John to ensure that he never finds himself in such an isolated situation again.

Finding an older person in a situation similar to John's is a common circumstance for ALONE's Community Response team as social exclusion is a growing issue in Ireland for older people. **Research** recently published by CARDI (Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland) stated that "a substantial number (of older people) are at risk of social exclusion". The study also revealed that 15% of older people in the Republic of Ireland have "little or no contact with a spouse, family or friends".

Speaking about the threats that the long Easter weekend poses to potentially vulnerable older people Sean Moynihan CEO of ALONE said, "We urge the public to take five minutes out of their weekend to call in on their older neighbours to check if they need anything. A

short conversation is something that so many of us take for granted, it happens naturally in our lives multiple times a day, but for someone who is socially isolated that small amount of human contact could mean the World. Please don't assume that somebody else will pay them a visit or that they don't need you to call on them, as outward appearances can be deceiving".

Established in 1977, ALONE provides vital supports to the one in ten older people who are in need. The charity provides a volunteer befriending service, campaigning services, a community response service and provides 100 age-friendly homes to older people in need. ALONE receives no state funding for their day to day activities, it is through the donations from members of the public that the organisation can carry out its essential activities.

ALONE can be contacted on (01) 679 1032 for those who have concerns about their own wellbeing, or the wellbeing of a vulnerable older person in the community.