

ALONE responds to today's DAFT.ie housing report

ALONE has responded to the publication of a report today noting that rents have risen by 14% in Dublin, and also rose in all other cities. The quarterly rental report was published by Daft.ie. ALONE states that 25% of all calls to the charity relate to housing issues, many of these relate to Department of Social Protection insisting that people negotiate lower rents with their landlord. The charity notes that while there is an across the board housing crisis, there is a concern that older people are being forgotten and left out of the conversation. Daft.ie economist Ronan Lyons, the author of the report, stated "This latest report shows that the housing crisis in Dublin is getting worse."

Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE, commented "We are acutely aware of the housing and rental crisis in Dublin and across the country, which has been clearly illustrated by today's worrying report from Daft.ie showing a sharp increase in rents. 25% of the calls that are made to ALONE by older people in need are in relation to housing and rental issues. The problem is getting progressively worse and we're concerned that older people are being left out of the conversation in relation to this issue."

He continued, "In a market where rents are increasing across the board, the Department of Social Protection are writing to those in receipt of rent supplement and telling them that if it is above the €520 cap for single persons, they will have to try and 'negotiate a voluntary reduction in rent'. If people can't negotiate their rent down, the letter states that they may be 'requested to source alternative accommodation'. As we know from today's DAFT report, there is practically no accommodation available for €520. People are also too scared to start conversations with landlords in relation to rent as once they open the lines of communications, they could risk being told their rent is increasing. This will result in many older people being forced to live in substandard accommodation as it is all they can afford."

Noting a particular instance, he commented, "One such case is that of an older couple who have been given one week to move out of their rented home as their rent supplement was reduced and they could no longer afford their home. Since 2010 their rent has increased by 50%. Rent supplement does not cover it. They are now staying separately with family members and the wife is recovering from a serious illness, with the stress and worry of the situation having a huge impact on her."

Currently there are over 2,000 boarded up social housing units across the country and 4,765 people over the age of 60 with a housing need. "This crisis needs to be addressed immediately as it will take years to fix and the government need to come up with creative solutions to the problem. The government needs to work with the community and voluntary sector who have a proven track record and commitment to providing housing solutions for the most vulnerable people in our communities. It makes economic sense to

incentivise the community and voluntary sector as the houses they provide will always be there as housing for older people, instead of large developers interested in simply making a profit.”

Committing to being part of a solution, Moynihan made a call on government to work in partnership with ALONE: “We are asking local government to release these social housing units properties to ALONE and other social housing providers so that we can provide homes to the most vulnerable older people in our society. ALONE will pay to renovate these properties and then support older people to live in these new homes. ALONE has a quality approved, costs effective model to address the problem. However we need support from local councillors on this, we ask them to support our Home Truths Campaign and sign our petition. This makes sense for economy, older people and society. A home is a right, not a privilege.”

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 or visit www.alone.ie