

‘Shaping the Future of Befriending for Older People in Ireland’

ALONE, the independent charity that works older people who are in need of assistance, today launched their National Befriending Directory, along with presenting the first draft of their Befriending Services Coordination Guidebook.

The Befriending Directory lists all the Befriending Services for older people in the country and will be a valuable resource to anyone working with vulnerable older people. ALONE have been approached on numerous occasions by organisations who required advice and support to set up a befriending service, and the production of a draft guidebook on co-ordinating befriending services was the result of these approaches. This draft guidebook was also presented at the launch today to assist all organisations who currently run a Befriending Service or those hoping to set one up. ALONE have requested feedback and suggestions from other organisations to ensure a fully comprehensive guidebook on service provision in this area can be produced. The draft guidebook presented today highlights how befriending is a health intervention and therefore needs to be structured and consistent, ensuring protection for older people who avail of such services and volunteers who provide them.

At the launch, Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE, commented “ALONE very much sees befriending as a preventative health measure and health intervention, however it is something that needs proper regulation and vetting to ensure the safety of both the volunteer and the older person. It’s our vision that every vulnerable older person in Ireland will have access to a quality befriending services. We hope that by coming together today we can take the first steps in the formation of a strong befriending infrastructure for older people in Ireland.

ALONE currently provide a crucial befriending service to provide companionship to isolated older people through a weekly visit – for many of these people, this visit is the only personal human contact they will have in a week. They have 180 volunteers who visit isolated and lonely older people, all of whom are trained, Garda vetted and supported by a small, dedicated team of staff.

For more information about ALONE’s befriending service please visit: www.alone.ie or call 01 679 1032

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