

ALONE

Helping older people in need



ANNUAL REPORT 2013

VISION STATEMENT

A society where older people are included as valued and empowered members of the community.

MISSION STATEMENT

ALONE supports older people in need through a befriending service, long-term housing and crisis support in the community.

ALONE'S SERVICE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Homes for older people in need as well as supports they require to live independently in the community for as long as possible.

BEFRIENDING

Weekly visits to isolated and lonely older people in the community, offering companionship and practical supports.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATION

Our volunteers are trained, Garda-vetted and supported by Volunteer Coordinators and Mentors.

SOCIAL PROGRAMME

ALONE Events provide a vital social outlet to older people who are isolated. The events offer something for everyone, from small cultural excursions to dinner dances and the annual summer holiday.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Information and outreach for older people in crisis; offering advice, advocacy and links to long term supports.

CAMPAIGNS FOR CHANGE

Promoting the rights of the 1 in 10 older people who are at risk of poverty, isolation and homelessness.

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

"GROWING OLD ISN'T A PROBLEM... LONELINESS IS".

Over the years this statement has appeared on ALONE Billboard Advertising all around Ireland. It is a statement that summarises the work of ALONE.

Living without contact, without your family, or friends, or neighbours can cause huge stress.

It was to relieve this loneliness and isolation that Willie Bermingham set-up the ALONE organisation. People were moved out of dilapidated housing and put into specifically built accommodation and they were visited by Volunteers on a regular basis.

From the very beginning ALONE has been at the forefront of making life better for those growing old. The staff and volunteers organised regular Dinner Dances arranged Summer Holidays; and set-up small outings to Cinemas and places of interest. From these regular contacts older people formed new friendships and got a new lease of life... loneliness and isolation were no longer a problem.

Of course none of this could be achieved without the support of the general public- from teachers and students who fundraise in schools; from Businesses and Companies who donate on a regular basis- even allowing their staff time to spend time cleaning, painting and decorating ALONE housing.

Sometimes it is not enough to say 'Thanks'... but I'll do it anyway:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees I say to our CEO, Sean Moynihan; to our staff and volunteers- and all who support the work of ALONE... THANKS!

Aidan Bowers



A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Aidan Bowers".



A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Sean Moynihan".

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S MESSAGE

2013 was another challenging year for organisations like ALONE. Further cuts to services and supports, as well as an increase in charges disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable, meant the numbers of people coming to us for help continued to rise.

Thankfully we have ensured that every older person who comes to ALONE facing poverty, homelessness, isolation and personal crises receives the support they need. We do this through partnership, volunteerism, and the creativity of an independent organisation driven by the needs of our community. We have a small dedicated staff team, a strong team of enthusiastic volunteers, and a loyal and generous public.

ALONE provides an alternative model of low-cost, high-value, quality services which keep older people safe, healthy and happy at home, with flexible supports. As the needs of older people are changing we are committed to innovating our services to ensure we meet these demands. Every older person who comes to us for help does so with different life experiences, different backgrounds and different challenges. We tailor every support to meet the needs of the individual to ensure that they all get the personalised support they need. We believe that charities must be leaders in quality service delivery for the most vulnerable members of our society.

My respect and thanks goes to our staff and volunteers and our many generous supporters for their hard work, inspiration and loyal support. This report shows that our efforts together do make a difference and in this, I believe, we can find hope for the future.

Seán Moynihan

STRENGTH IN UNITY 2010-2013

2013 was the final year of our strategic plan, "Strength in Unity". During this period of recession and austerity we experienced a significant increase in the number of older people coming to us for support. We expanded our services and ensured that every older person who contacted ALONE got the help that they needed.

- Demand for some services tripled
- Achieved an international ISO quality standard
- Launched a new service to help older people in emergency situations
- Housed 100 vulnerable older people in comfortable, age friendly and secure ALONE homes
- Case management was introduced to ensure the best, person centred, support for the older people in our services
- Developed training and supports for volunteers
- Produced a Residents Handbook detailing the rights and responsibilities of our residents
- Developed new information leaflets and packs for ALONE's services
- Mapped all Befriending Services nationally
- Increased the number of small and large events to more than 30 a year
- More than €500,000 was spent to ensure that all of our homes can meet our new age friendly standards
- A new communication and campaigns strategy ensured we spoke out for the needs of the vulnerable older people we work with



2013 IN NUMBERS



ALONE CAMPAIGNS FOR CHANGE

Our Campaigns for Change highlight the real issues that affect the older people we work with on a daily basis. We speak out against unfair government cuts to benefits and services, as well as specific cases where older people's rights are being compromised.

ALONE Campaigns begin when we cannot find a resolution to a problem faced by an older person who has come to us for help. We campaign to the media, statutory organisations and public representatives as we try and find solutions to these problems. Our campaigns are based on the experiences of the older people we work with.

In 2013 we gained national coverage in print, online and on broadcast media, worth a Total Media Value of €569,895.

In 2013 we called on the government to take action on fuel poverty, for a review of The Fair Deal scheme, for regulation of nursing homes and home help, and for reversal of the on-going cuts to entitlements.

CASE STUDY - Mary is 84. She was in hospital for two years after being admitted with pneumonia. Although she no longer needed acute medical care she remained in hospital due to a delay between solicitors and doctors transferring her to a nursing home. Mary had no family who were able to advocate on her behalf and she remained in hospital with no social or emotional support for almost two years. ALONE campaigned to the hospital and solicitors to ensure steps were taken to move her to the comfort of a nursing home.



ALONE CAMPAIGNING IN ACTION

Housing Adaptation Grants are available to make the homes of older people age friendly and safe places to live. Grants can be sought to add a ground floor bathroom or toilet, a stair lift or other maintenance that will make the house more age friendly. These grants were a vital resource to ensure older people could age safely and independently in the community. When the grants were dramatically reduced by €20 million in 2013, ALONE quickly became aware of the crisis this caused for many older people. ALONE met the head of Housing Policy at the Department of the Environment and detailed the effect this cut was having on those who needed home adaptations. Following our campaign €1 million extra was made available for councils to respond to grant applications. This meeting also resulted in ALONE's involvement in a national review of grant-aid schemes. We continue to campaign for the full restoration of vital grants for those most at risk.



COMMUNITY RESPONSE

We have increased organisational efficiency by making Community Response our assessment 'gateway' to meet consistently rising demand for all of our services.

- Two staff dealt with an average of 28 new cases per month (336 over the year)
- The team managed the Senior Alert Pendant Alarm Scheme.
- Housing was the main reason for people contacting our Community Response Service
- Poor housing conditions, Issues with landlords, rising rents and people facing evictions were some of the main issues regarding housing.

The Community Response team also carried out a project to map all of the befriending services in the country. In total 58 Befriending Services were identified as well as 130 additional services for older people.



SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Enquiries for housing in 2013 came from older people in poor-quality housing or those facing eviction.

- 50%+ of our new residents in 2013 came directly from homeless services.
- The average number of residents in ALONE Supportive Housing was 91 per month.
- There was an increase in applicants with higher needs; including dementia, poor physical health, mental illness, and domestic and elder abuse.
- As we continued to focus on accommodating older people with higher support needs, unplanned care interventions went up by 60% in the areas of personal care and physical health.
- We held 10 community meetings to allow structured feedback and participation by older people in our service.

HOUSING MAINTENANCE

- In ALONE Housing 405 maintenance requests were processed in 2013
 - 2% were emergency calls
 - 46% were urgent
 - 52% were routine
- 3 properties were fully refurbished to an age friendly standard
- 6 properties were decorated and fitted out for new residents
- 1 age friendly bathroom was provided
- ALONE successfully appealed planning refusal to An Bord Pleanála. We now have planning permission for the development of two new houses and the refurbishment of an existing house on a site in north Dublin.

BEFRIENDING

- Referrals of isolated and lonely older people trebled to 107 in the year.
- 160 older people were visited by ALONE volunteers every week in 2013.

The older people befriended by ALONE also benefit from the advice, advocacy and support of our wider team.

SOCIAL PROGRAMME

- An average of 140 older people attended each of our three Dinner Dances.
- Smaller events were also organised to cater for older people who prefer smaller groups and those with restricted mobility and sensory disabilities.
- Our monthly cinema club had an average attendance of 20.
- 45 older people (supported by 15 volunteers) went on our annual summer holiday to Arklow.

'Since linking in with ALONE my confidence is coming back. There is some purpose in the week. Something to look forward to instead of an aimless and pointless existence.' Leo, 70



PROFESSIONALISM AND VOLUNTEERISM – THE ALONE MODEL OF SERVICE

A spirit of volunteerism and a belief in the value of community-based services are central to the culture of ALONE. In 2013, 160 volunteers worked closely with staff throughout all of our services.

We offer our volunteers strong support, training and an opportunity to contribute to the organisation at all levels. Our Volunteer Leadership Group, made up of project leaders and mentors, elects three members to the Board every 3 years.

In 2013 volunteers gave their time to Community Response, Supportive Housing, Maintenance, Administration, Planning, Communications, Fundraising and Finance. Two volunteers from the European Voluntary Scheme worked full time in Volunteer Coordination and Supportive Housing from February. We also trained experienced volunteers to provide mentoring and support to new volunteers.

Apart from the passion, skills and dedication our volunteers bring, this model also makes economic sense. In 2013 volunteer hours were calculated at a value of €225,000 (based on a modest carer's wage of €15 an hour).

As volunteering is as much about the experience of the volunteer as the service that they provide, we are delighted that ALONE volunteers experience a high level of satisfaction and that we had a 90% retention rate in 2013.

'I'm very much enjoying the visits: I find it a very enriching part of my week.'
Laura, ALONE Volunteer

CASE STUDY - Tommy is 70 years old. When he made contact with ALONE he was living in a damp bedsit on the second floor. He had to climb up a flight of stairs to use the shared toilet and shower which added to his mobility problems. These cramped and unsuitable living conditions were having a seriously negative impact on his mental health. Thankfully an age friendly home with ALONE became available for Tommy. The Housing Support Team worked with him as he adjusted to his new surroundings and circumstances. Tommy is settling in very well to his new home. He is making new friends and he also has a volunteer who visits him on a weekly basis.



'BEING' PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

This exhibition featured portraits of older people who have used ALONE services taken by award-winning photographer Jason Clarke and was held in May as part of Bealtaine, an annual festival that celebrates creativity as we age.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications were the backbone to all campaigns in 2013.

We distributed quarterly newsletters to 10,000 people. We doubled our Twitter followers and increased our Facebook likes by 60% to 2200. Our website attracted 1,300 hits monthly.

Our '12 Faces of Christmas Campaign' on Facebook reached over 15,000 people.

ALONE also nominated Willie Bermingham to be the name of the new Bridge over the River Liffey in 2013. This campaign was run online through social media. Willie was voted in third place ahead of a long list of other prominent Irish figures.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

We were granted €10,000 by the Community Foundation for Ireland, to develop befriending training for other organisations. We are also working on a framework that voluntary groups can use to set-up such a service in their area.

Volunteers presented 30 school talks, introducing students to the challenges facing older people in need and our work to improve their lives.



FUNDRAISING

There is no doubt that 2013 was a challenging year across the charity sector. ALONE would like to extend our warmest thanks to the hundreds of companies, individuals, schools and community groups around the country that continued to support us throughout the year. Without this support we simply would not have been able to continue our vital services for older people that need them most.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

Corporate support was strong throughout the year and accounted for 24% of our total income. Major supporters include: JC Decaux, Dublin Bus, Bonfire, Brown Brothers Harriman and Heatons. We also had an increased number of corporate volunteering days which involved painting, decorating, gardening and social events for the older people.

COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

We had fantastic support from individuals who took part in the Flora Women's Mini Marathon and other sporting events both at home and abroad. There were coffee mornings, music events, holly sales, choral services, and the Santa Dash which has been running for over 30 years in aid of ALONE!

'COMPASSION ALONE IS NOT ALWAYS ENOUGH'

Our Christmas campaign raised awareness of isolation in older people and the risks they face during winter. Unilever supplied 263 sets of household and food Christmas hampers. The Knights of Columbanus donated 120 Christmas dinners.

December in particular was a very busy month with 20% of all our income received in the lead up to and during the Christmas period. We were delighted to have been selected as the charity of choice for the annual Paddy Campbell Christmas Exhibition in Bewley's Café, Grafton Street which raised awareness as well as funds for ALONE.

Legacies continue to be an important income stream for ALONE accounting for 40% of our fundraised income.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

In 2013 we continued to see an increase in demand for our services. In order to ensure all older people got the support they required, we ran a €150k deficit, at a time it was needed most.

- 8 out of 10 staff work in front line services
- 100% of public and corporate donations go to front line services
- Administration costs are 11%

We are constantly innovating and looking for new ways to provide high value, low cost services to older people in need. We do this by maximising the support of volunteers, cost substitution, linking with businesses and voluntary and statutory organisations.

INCOME	2013
General Donations	111,787
Corporate Donations	125,908
Legacies	248,506
Rent	252,888
Investment Income	117,446
Court Fines Income	3,020
Total Income	859,555

EXPENDITURE (operating)	2013
Staffing	456,239
Volunteer Activity	62,867
Transport	5,172
Office and Administration	112,444
Property Insurance	20,460
Property Repairs and Maintenance	82,650
Provisions	9,033
Campaigning and Communications	72,520
Fees/Memberships	23,991
Total	845,376
Capital Expenditure	165,926
Total Expenditure	1,011,302

BOARD OF TRUSTEE'S 2013

Aidan Bowers (Chairman)

Liz Kilcommons

Patricia Larkin

Gerard Cosgrove

Pat Morgan

Michael Hodgins

Annette Gavigan

Jeremy Chapman

Kevin Mc Conville (Honorary)

Seán Moynihan (Chief Executive Officer)



OLDER PEOPLE IN 2013 – THE FACTS

- The Irish population of over 65s is increasing by 400 every week, and projections suggest it might quadruple by 2046
- 4,765 older people are awaiting social housing
- There is a significant shortage of nursing home beds, a crisis that is set to escalate dramatically in the coming years
- Cuts for older people in Budget 2013 included
 - Prescription charges increased from 50cent to €1.50 per item
 - Telephone and Electricity allowance was reduced by average of €15 per month
 - Respite care grant reduced by €325

Undoubtedly there are challenging times ahead, but we are committed to continuing to support those older people who need us most.



COMMITMENT TO TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Before recent scandals hit the Irish charity sector and before the long-awaited government regulation of charities followed in 2014, ALONE took a leadership position around transparency and accountability. As a small independent charity providing vital services, ALONE is acutely aware of our responsibilities to the older people who need us and to the donors who make our work possible.

These are some of the measures we take to ensure that we do the right thing:

- As well as an Annual Report we publish a Trustee's Report with more detail about our governance and finances.
- Our accounts are externally and independently audited and our income and expenditure is published annually.
- We have achieved an internationally recognised ISO quality standard for our services and our services are regularly internally and independently audited.
- We have signed up for the Investing in Volunteers standard.
- Volunteers are Garda Vetted.
- We have signed up to ICTR (the representative body for Irish charities) standards in Fundraising.
- We have signed up to the Government Voluntary Code for Housing Bodies.
- Our Board operates to good practice guidelines for governance and has signed up to Governance Code.

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