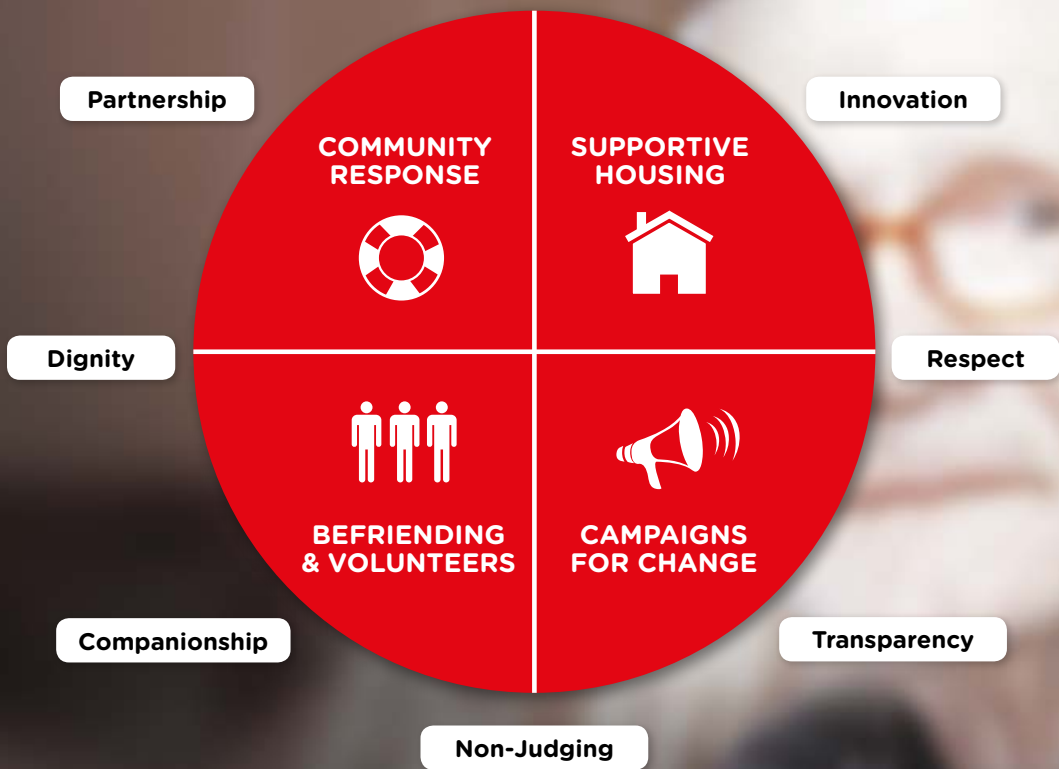


SUPPORTING OLDER PEOPLE IN NEED SINCE 1977



# NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2017

# ALONE

Helping older people in need

## Introduction



ALONE was founded to help the most vulnerable older people in our society. Our reputation has been built on providing vital services to those older people who need us most and where necessary, challenging the status quo. We ask the important questions that are often ignored:

- Why are 1 in 5 older people marginalised and vulnerable?
- What can be done to change this?

Economic recessions are times that demand clear direction and courage. We have risen to the challenge many times before and although our last plan was ambitious (**‘Strength in Unity 2010-2013’**), we met and exceeded our goals. In the last 4 years ALONE has maintained its values and responded when tested, with both compassion and effectiveness. We believe that with our new strategic plan **‘No One Left Behind’**, we can do the same.

These are challenging times for many, but the vulnerable older people we work with have been particularly affected by the recent austerity:

- Increased cuts and additional charges that have disproportionately affected the most vulnerable.
- Reduced community services and supports.
- A lack of appropriate options for older people between living independently and living in residential care.
- An over reliance on private sector for care with no way of controlling costs or quality of service.

The Irish population is aging dramatically and the number of people over the age of 65 is set to double in the next 25 years. In ALONE we have already seen an increase in demand for our services, and this demand will continue to rise in the difficult years ahead. In order to meet this demand our services need to be outcome focused and ready to adapt with the changing needs. We must be innovative and prepared to swim against the tide and to stand up for the older people we work for. This Strategic Plan, **‘No One Left Behind’**, outlines how we propose to do this.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of ALONE, I want to acknowledge our volunteers and staff. We rely on their dedication and support and without them we simply would not be able to deliver our services to the current standard and scale. The next few years will be challenging, especially for those who are already on the margins of society and we will continue to rely on the support and dedication of our team.

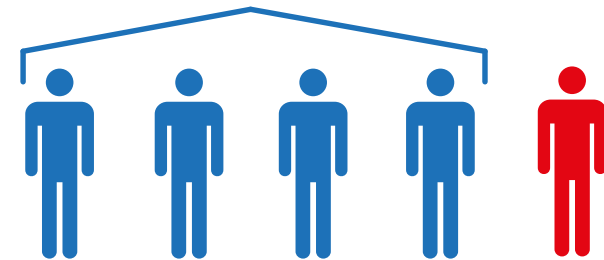
I thank everyone for the work you have done and for your commitment to the journey ahead. Together we can make sure ALONE is always effective and compassionate and continues to be a voice for those most in need. For me, it is an honour to be Chief Executive Officer of such an organisation and group of people.

Sean Moynihan



ALONE Chief Executive Officer

**1 in 5 Older People are homeless, socially isolated, living in deprivation or in crisis.**



Source: CSO, 2012



## Why is Loneliness amongst Older People a National Health Issue?

*'Loneliness and isolation is one of the most horrible feelings a person can have. A person can be in a big crowd of people and still feel consumed by loneliness, because the people are strangers who do not care about you.'*

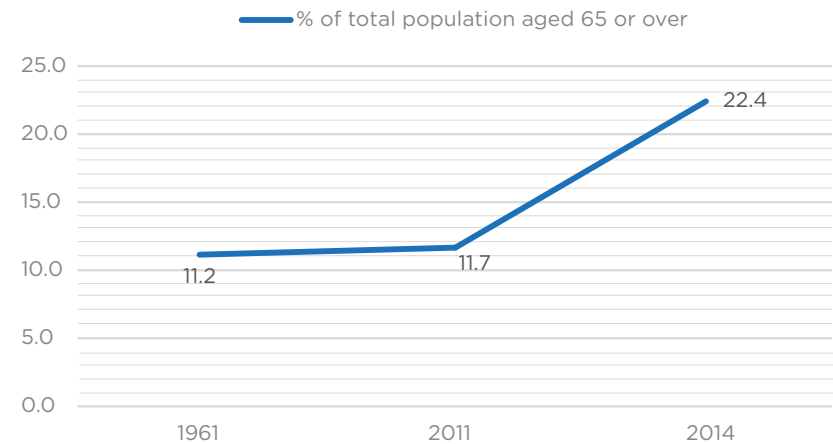
Jack is 70 and uses the ALONE Befriending Service.

Here's what the research proves:

- Loneliness can lead to a number of health issues including depression, dementia, disability, cardiovascular disease, infectious illness, cognitive deterioration and mortality (Steptoe et al 2013).
- "Loneliness is an important predictor to depression," (Kamiya et al 2013). Depression is projected to be the second leading cause of disability worldwide by 2020 (TILDA2011).
- In an RCSI 2005 study it is documented that 29% of older people living alone reported feeling lonely compared to 6% of other categories. In Ireland, estimates suggest that the overall economic cost of mental health problems is €3 billion per annum; only cardiovascular disease is likely to contribute more to the overall burden of illness (TILDA , 2011).
- "Social isolation increases the risk of developing dementia" (Cacioppo, 2007).
- "Social isolation has also been associated with elevated blood pressure, C-reactive protein, and fibrinogen and with heightened inflammatory and metabolic responses to stress" (Steptoe et al 2013).
- There are disproportionate numbers of females among people with high support needs reporting loneliness. The proportion of females living alone increases with age, with females accounting for almost three quarters of all persons aged 85 and over living alone (CSO, 2012).
- According to a 2005 report by RCSI 32% of older people with high severe functional impairments felt lonely "quite/very often" while 38% felt lonely "sometimes" which demonstrates a strong link between disability, depression, high support needs and loneliness.

ALONE's Befriending Service aims to provide companionship to isolated older people through a weekly visit to alleviate the effects of loneliness. For many older people who receive the service, this is the only personal human contact they have from one end of the week to the next; **befriending is undeniably a health support service.**

## Rising Demographics

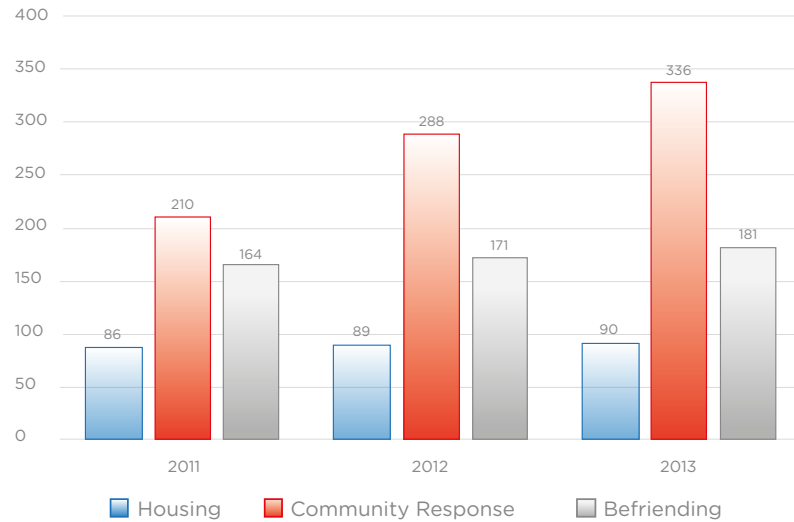


Source: CSO, 2012

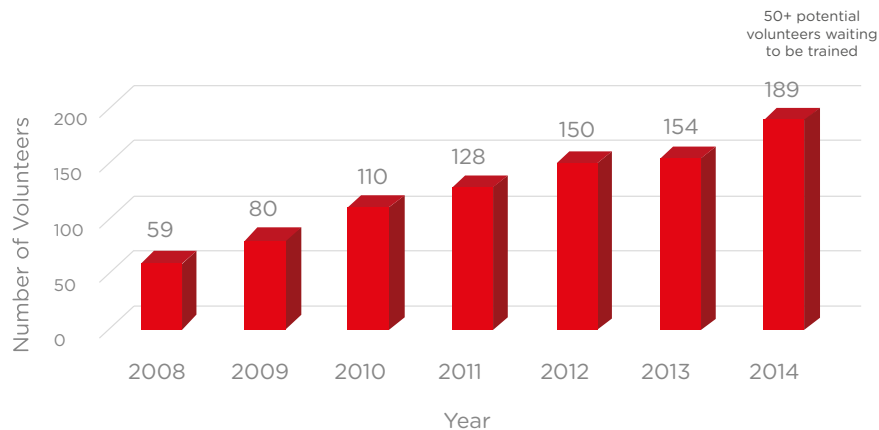
## The ALONE Story

ALONE is an independent charity that works with the 1 in 5 older people who are homeless, socially isolated, living in deprivation or in crisis. It was founded in 1977 by Dublin Fireman Willie Bermingham and a small group of volunteers in response to the living conditions of isolated older people. Over the years ALONE has developed to provide Supportive Housing, Befriending, Community Response and Campaigning services to hundreds of older people every week. We receive no Government funding for our day-to-day activities so we rely solely on the generosity of the public to continue our work. ALONE's services are quality approved and are delivered 365 days a year. We operate with a ratio of 1 staff member to every 18 volunteers.

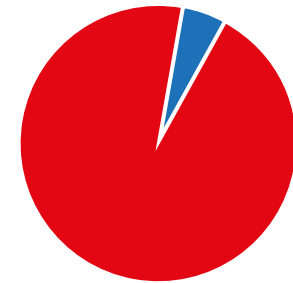
No. of Older People availing of Service per year



NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS 2008-2014



**ALONE benefits from a unique blend of volunteer energy and skills fused with our committed and hard-working staff.**



■ Staff  
■ Volunteers

In ALONE we operate on a ratio of 1 staff member to every 18 volunteers

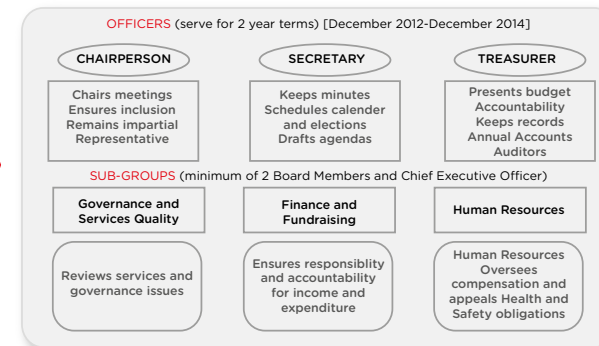
**STRUCTURE OF THE BOARD 2014**  
ALONE is a Charitable Trust governed by a Deed of Trust  
The Board of Trustees is the governing body of ALONE



**MEMBERSHIP**  
Min 3 Max 10  
All members are equal

7 Permanent members (Maximum)

3 from VLG (3 year term) [June 2012-June 2015]



- The Board approves and supports progress on the plans drawn up (following consultation) by the CEO and ensures that they are sound and in accord with ALONE's vision.
- Board members do not normally have an executive function.
- The Board normally meets 6 times a year.
- Sub-groups meet as required and agreed, and report back to the Board.
- The Board or its sub-groups can call extra meetings as needs arise.
- The CEO attends all regular meetings of the Board and sub-groups.
- The Board makes decisions based on the recommendations of sub-groups.

**Our Vision** is a society where older people are included as valued and empowered members of the community.

**Our Mission** is to support older people in need through long-term Housing, Befriending, Community Response and Campaigning services.

**What we do:**

**ALONE Supportive Housing** provides homeless older people with the comfort, safety, and support they need to age in the community. Staff and volunteers work with each resident to ensure they receive the practical and personal supports required to live fulfilling, independent lives as they age. Every ALONE home is age friendly, has its own front door, and is warm and comfortable.

**ALONE's Befriending Service** provides companionship for isolated older people. Loneliness is a serious health risk and a volunteer visit of just one hour a week can make a huge difference. Volunteers can support older people to get out and about, help with day to day tasks, or have a chat over a cup of tea at home. All ALONE volunteers are trained, Garda vetted and supported by experienced mentors.

**ALONE's Community Response** works with older people who are in crisis situations and those who don't know where else to go for help. The main issues we deal with are poor housing, health, elder abuse, poverty and lack of services. We address the emergency situation and work with other agencies to provide long term sustainable solutions for the older people in need.

**ALONE's Campaigns** are designed to tell the truth about the challenges some older people face. We work directly with older people in need, meaning that all our campaigns represent the real situations facing the older people we work with. As well as highlighting issues, our campaigns are also designed to make real changes at an individual, local and political level.



**Our Core Values**

**Partnership**

ALONE listens to the older people we work with and strives to meet their needs and help maximise their independence. We work closely with a wide range of services, both statutory and voluntary.

**Innovation**

ALONE is committed to a process of continuous improvement by learning, training and adapting to ensure that we meet the changing needs of older people we work with.

**Dignity and respect for the individual**

ALONE believes that every person's dignity and human rights should be honoured. We work with each older person that comes to us for help to understand the issue they need support with and strive to come up with an individual solution to their individual problem.

**Transparency**

We are committed to working in an accountable, responsible and professional manner.

**Companionship**

Our volunteers provide crucial friendship to many older people. At ALONE we extend the spirit of companionship to one another and to all organisations and others with whom we work.

**Non-Judgemental**

It is ALONE policy to treat everyone in a non-judgemental, open and professional manner.



## Our Culture - Living Our Values

ALONE has a rich history and since the organisation was established in 1977 many people have contributed to making ALONE unique. By combining our past knowledge with the best of the new, ALONE has developed into the organisation that we are today.



Culture includes the values, visions, norms, working language, systems, symbols, beliefs and habits of an organisation. It is evident in the day-to-day workings of the organisation as well as in the pattern of behaviours and expectations that we teach to new staff and volunteers. Our culture affects the way we interact with each other, with older people, and with external stakeholders.

Everyone in ALONE has different skills, backgrounds, value systems and life experiences, and by defining our culture, ALONE is expressing what is valued and respected in the work that we do.

At every level in this organisation, with every policy and every procedure, our ethos is turned from words into action.

### The ALONE Culture and Ethos in Action is:

- Effective and compassionate
- Creative, innovative and solution-focused
- Leaders among services for older people
- We are all individually accountable
- All staff and volunteers are equally valued
- Rights Based - we look for sustainable solutions for people

While our first 2010-2013 Strategic Plan '*Strength in Unity*' was ambitious, we achieved and exceeded our key goals. It finished with a review and consultation process leading to our new Strategic Plan '*No One Left Behind.*'

This new plan, and the process to develop it were designed to encompass all views and knowledge within ALONE, including the older people who are at the heart of our organisation.

This process was carried out by both staff and the Volunteer Leadership Group. Staff carried out the external consultation and the volunteers did the internal consultations (including all volunteers and older people). The process included:

(1) Facilitated consultations with Staff and Volunteer Leadership Group;

(2) Survey of;

- Older people
- Volunteers
- Board Members
- External agencies (including HSE frontline staff and management, social workers, Dublin City Council, Government Departments and policy makers, statutory funders of services for older people, other NGOs).

(3) Scoping of Environment, External Services and Statistical Analysis of ALONE services.

(4) Communicating data from surveys for further reflection, feedback and discussion;

- to Board and Volunteers
- to older people who use ALONE's services
- to key external stakeholders

(5) Staff and Volunteer Leadership Group developing framework for Strategic Plan priorities

These goals are informed by the following commitments:

- A. We will continue to promote and develop our unique ethos.
- B. We will aim to be leaders in the development of quality, low-cost, high-value, effective and compassionate services run by supported, trained staff and volunteers.
- C. Services will be evaluated to ensure that they meet practical and emotional needs. We will adapt to meet the emerging needs of older people in line with current research and good practice.
- D. Through income management and fundraising we will ensure that ALONE is financially stable.

**Service Goals**

1. We will increase the capacity of our Campaigns Service to effect change and champion the rights of our older people.
2. We will expand our Supportive Housing model for ALONE residents, so they can age at home for longer.
3. We will explore partnerships with statutory and voluntary sector agencies that will seek to address the increasing service needs of older people and address gaps in continuum of care.
4. We will increase our long term housing capacity and ensure it is linked to supports.

**Knowledge Goals**

5. We will develop training for staff and volunteers for the changing needs of our services and link these to new quality standards.
6. We will utilise new technology to maximise our impact.

**Organisation Goals**

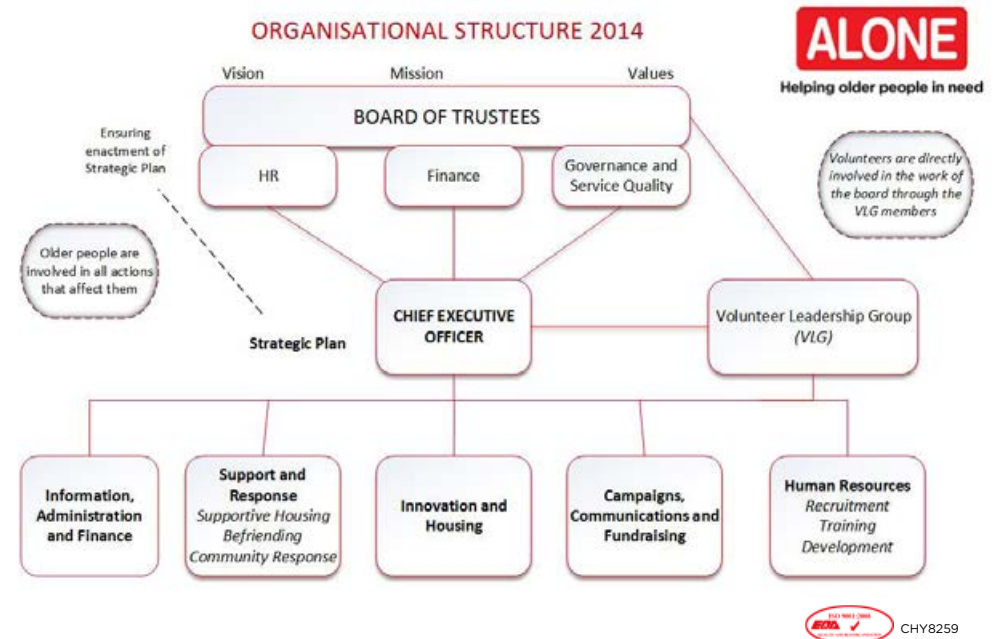
7. We will develop participation and feedback to include older people in decision-making and provide opportunities for them to become involved in our work in meaningful ways.
8. We will develop our Board and organisational structure to increase diversity and expertise in areas which correspond to our mission statement and goals.
9. We will discuss and decide on the national dimension of our activities to offer training, supports and services in the most useful and appropriate ways.

**Examples of key projects include**

- Develop a National Befriending Quality Standard
- Develop a National Befriending Network
- Double the number of supportive homes for older people in need

**Implementation of Strategic Plan**

In order to focus on the implementation of the above Goals, we have restructured the organisation as follows:



Our Goals will be implemented through Annual Implementation Plans as well as more detailed Departmental Plans. Progress will be tracked through regular performance management and an Annual Review which will involve the Board, the Volunteer Leadership Group and all Departments. An annual survey will consult with and include the views and feedback of older people to ensure their voice continues to be heard as part of the review.

## ALONE's Commitment to Quality and Accountability



ALONE are proud of the fact that we operate to the highest standards and we are leaders in transparency and accountability. We have a strong ethos about how we operate and how we manage all donations. It is important to us that we embody our values throughout our work.

We aim to ensure the best use of the wonderful support we receive. Without this support, whether it be through time offered, skills shared or money donated, it would not be possible to continue providing services to the 1 in 5 older people most in need.

ALONE leads, not follows, in the area of Quality. Our services have achieved an international ISO standard. Here is how ALONE ensures quality of service, transparency and accountability:

- The Board is signed up to the governance code
- Our accounts are externally and independently audited, and we comply with SORP standards (Statement of Recommended Practice for Charities)
- We publish an Annual Report which shows the work we do, the outcomes achieved and our income and expenditure
- Our services are internally and externally audited
- We have achieved an internationally recognised ISO quality standard for our services
- We comply with ICTR standards in Fundraising
- We have signed up for Investing in Volunteers standard
- We have signed up to the Government Voluntary Code for Housing Bodies

## Thank You —

We need your ongoing contribution and commitments

*If you are reading this plan, you may well be someone who already contributes to ALONE and makes a difference to older people in need. Thank you, we value your contribution and your ongoing commitment.*

*This is your plan and we will need your support and efforts to implement it. The needs and numbers of older people are changing so we must continue to adapt, train and resource ourselves.*

*While our previous structures and actions served us well, new structures will be needed to achieve these new goals. It is a tribute to the work done by so many over so many years that we are in the position to make these plans and decisions for ourselves.*

*We will need everyone's support in the areas of campaigning, fundraising, advocating and providing the practical supports to older people.*

*For this plan to be successful it will need to guide all of our actions. It is only with support that it can be achieved. The key to all we do is our focus on older people and our teamwork of staff and volunteers working together, each equally valued.*

*Please feel free to give feedback or ask questions on this document or on the ethos of ALONE. I am happy to discuss these matters and can be contacted on 01 6791032 or [sean.m@alone.ie](mailto:sean.m@alone.ie)*

*Signed*

*Sean Moynihan*

*ALONE Chief Executive Officer*



# ALONE

**Helping older people in need**

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