

ALONE calls on Minister Varadkar to take action and amend Fair Deal legislation

Dublin, 19th February 2015 ALONE has today welcomed Minister Varadkar's motivation to remove the existing cap on Fair Deal Scheme funding and hope the cabinet will support him in this matter. The budget for Fair deal has changed from €998 million in 2013 to €950million in 2015 despite our dramatically ageing population.

Minister Varadkar said on Monday that he "would like to see the budget cap removed". ALONE are asking that the Minister take the next step and take this matter to The Cabinet or the Taoiseach for approval so that he can then amend the legislation. The waiting list is currently at 11 weeks but it is projected to increase to 18 – 20 weeks unless immediate action is taken.

Sean Moynihan, Chief Executive Officer of ALONE commented, "We, like Minister Varadkar believe that the Fair Deal Scheme should be designed to respond to the needs of the older people who will need it, and vulnerable older people shouldn't be punished simply because the scheme was significantly underfunded to begin with. As the Fair Deal Scheme is capped it means that when the money is gone, there is little hope of an older person securing a bed, regardless of their need. We are now left with a situation where someone has to die before money is freed up to give someone a place. This is not a suitable or humane way to run a health service."

Moynihan elaborated, "Whilst we do believe that the Fair Deal Scheme needs improvement, we also believe the Government should be looking elsewhere for solutions. It is a very outdated model to put those who are not entirely dependent on full time care into nursing homes. Many older people want to remain independent in their own communities for as long as possible and the government should be supporting them by providing adequate primary care services, instead of cutting them".

ALONE believes that older people should be supported to live within the community by providing suitable accommodation, home supports and social outlets. This type of model makes sense to the individual, the community and the economy, and there are many other models worldwide that can be copied and adapted. ALONE would welcome a conversation with the Government around other cost effective solutions for housing and care for older people in the community.

Moynihan continued, "We need to break down the dependency on the private sector and on expensive options in the provision of care for our older people. In the last few years opportunities have been missed where the government could better utilised resources that they have for the care of older people".

ALONE have conducted a cost comparison on the various options for caring for older people:

- The cost of a nursing home bed per day is between €100 and €200
- The cost of home help 3 times a day is between €50 and €70
- The cost of ALONE housing with supports is €34 a day

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