

ALONE call on Minister to Empower HIQA

ALONE says that the Memorandum of Agreement still leaves almost 80% of vulnerable residents in nursing homes inadequately protected from situations of neglect and abuse

Dublin, 24th February 2015 ALONE are calling on Minister Varadkar to ensure that a robust system is put in place to ensure all individual complaints made against nursing homes are independently investigated. A new Memorandum of Agreement between HIQA and the Ombudsman excludes private nursing homes where almost 18,000 older people reside.

Sean Moynihan, Chief Executive Officer of ALONE said, “There are currently 700 allegations of mistreatment and bad practices at nursing and care homes in Ireland, this is a matter of grave concern to us and to older people generally. HIQA does not have the power to investigate individual complaints and as a result older people have been left with nowhere to turn”.

Moynihan explained, “Currently vulnerable older people are being asked to complain to the organisation that they are alleging abuse against. The new *Memorandum of Agreement* between HIQA and the Ombudsman only protects the 20% of older people residing in public nursing homes. This leaves the 80% of nursing home residents in private institutions at continued risk of abuse without anywhere to go for help”.

Moynihan continues, “The state is paying millions each year for private nursing to provide care for our older people, and yet we know that some of these centres are not delivering on this promise. The fact that this government has committed so much money to these care homes, where in some cases abuse is occurring, is a concern for us all. We need to ensure that if a claim of abuse is made, that appropriate and decisive action can be taken”

“Despite our history of institutional abuse and despite the growing public outrage we are at risk of repeating the mistake of placing too much trust on the institution and not adequately safeguarding the vulnerable service users. Eleven Nursing homes were closed between 2010 and 2012 due to sub-standard care, ten of these were private and one was voluntary. Even one incidence should be enough to ensure we act. TV programmes have shocked the nation, a report has listed over 700 incidents within nursing homes, some of these being very serious cases of abuse, and still there are no effective safeguards in place”.

Moynihan concluded, “We implore Minister Varadkar to take immediate action and amend the legislation to allow HIQA or the Ombudsman to investigate individual complaints within private residential care and nursing homes. ALONE is happy to support the government on this matter and to facilitate it in any way we can. The balance needs to be tipped in favour of vulnerable older people and residents in nursing homes to ensure they are protected”.

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, alternatively you can visit www.alone.ie