

ALONE propose solutions to Government to free up acute hospital beds

Housing with supports, nursing home beds step down facilities and care in the community

6th January 2015 ALONE are calling on the government to address the hospital trolley crisis by providing more housing with supports, more nursing home beds and more step down facilities and care in the community in order to free up the acute hospital beds as well as providing appropriate care for older people.

ALONE have stated that they are not surprised with the current number of people on hospital trolleys, as reported by the Irish Nurses and Midwives' Organisation (INMO) earlier today. Sean Moynihan, Chief Executive Officer of ALONE commented, "The age demographic of Ireland is skewing towards an ageing population with 400 people turning 65 years of age each week. That is up to 20,000 people turning 65 years of age each year. Our current health system is not equipped to deal with this, nor is it committed to addressing the current crisis which without intervention will only continue to get worse."

This is evidenced by the following facts:

- Home help hours have been cut by 1.6 million hours in the last 3 years
- Budget 2015 allocated only €25 million despite a HSE request for €100 million to free up hospital beds.
- There are 682 older people in acute hospital beds who are waiting to be discharged (HSE Performance Assurance Report October 2014). Older people represent almost 90% of those waiting to be discharged.
- There are currently 1,188 older people on the Fair Deal waiting list. (This represents an almost 200% increase from February 2014)

ALONE note that the Fair Deal waiting list is the only health service list without a target to deal with the crisis of it's growing numbers. The requirement for nursing home beds is going to rise by 8,000 by 2021.

Sean Moynihan continued, "The shortage of hospital beds is a complex issue and there is not one solution to this, but there are a range of solutions that are more economically viable, more effective and more compassionate than having sick people on hospital trolleys. There are many older people who are well enough to be at home provided they have adequate support. However they cannot be discharged as there are no options of care available to them. "

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

- The cost of an acute hospital bed is between €800 and €900 per day
- 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

He continued, "This comparison demonstrates that there is an urgent need to properly resource and plan for the housing and care options for our older people. Everything is linked – and we need to look at this crisis in a broader context and come up with an integrated solution that will make sense to the individual and the economy. ALONE have been advocating for long term solutions rather than short term 'sticking plasters' to address the issue of caring for older people and assisting them to live within their community."

ALONE believe that nursing homes are not always the answer, and strive to keep older people living within the community by providing suitable accommodation, home supports and social outlets. ALONE's model of supportive housing in the community makes sense to the individual, the community and the economy. They would welcome a conversation around other cost effective solutions for housing and care for older people in the community

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