

ALONE launch Home First Campaign 2015
“Why are we forcing older people out of their homes?”

15th June 2015 ALONE have today launched our Home First Campaign 2015 raising the question, “Why are we forcing older people out of their homes?” ALONE are very concerned that a third of those in nursing home care, could live at home if they were supported to do so. The Programme for Government, the HSE Service Plan and the National Positive Ageing Strategy all support the concept of older people ageing at home but sufficient funds are not being invested to make it happen.

ALONE believe that older people should be supported to remain living in the community. In Ireland, more than one third of older people in long-term nursing homes beds have low/ medium dependency needs, meaning that they could live at home if they were be provided with adequate home care. Currently 57% of the budget for older person’s services is being allocated for just 6% of the older population.

The percentage of our older population in nursing home care is already 35% greater than the EU average and the average stay in Irish nursing homes is 1.6 years longer than our UK neighbours. These figures prove that we are forcing older people into nursing homes before they need to go in. ALONE acknowledge that nursing homes provide a vital service but argue that they are not always the best answer and that the statistics prove that Ireland is not committed enough to finding alternative models of care for its ageing population

ALONE are proposing that the Government construct a plan to re-allocate a portion of funding from the Fair Deal Scheme to provide support to older people who are able to live independently with some level of supports of home care.

Sean Moynihan, CEO of ALONE says, “As a nation, we are pushing older people into nursing homes ahead of their time, while at the same time others who need additional supports are being made do without. In ALONE we strongly believe that more older people could be supported to live in the community but most aren’t being given this option. We are calling on the Government to reallocate some of the Fair Deal funds so that older people can source care in their homes, ensuring that nursing home care is a last resort rather than their only choice. In the last 5 years there has been a huge decrease in the supports for older people to age at home. Funding for home help has been cut by €1.6 million since 2011 and Housing Adaption Grants for older people have been cut by almost €30 million in the same period”.

Moynihan concluded, “We have a dramatically ageing population and the Government needs to take this into account and plan accordingly now. The government need to look at options of supportive housing and extra care housing that would allow older people to age in the community with additional supports. By 2026 it is envisaged that 16% of the population will be over 65 years of age, they currently make up 11% of the population, the current model of prioritising nursing home care over all else simply isn’t sustainable going forward. Our population currently has a ratio of six people to every older person and by 2045 this will have changed to a ratio of 3:1. We need to plan accordingly now by making decisions that reflect the wishes of our older people and are more

economically sound than our current system. At the moment there are very few options other than nursing home care and independent living.”