

Emigration has left older people ALONE this St. Patricks Day

Dublin , 6th March 2015 This St. Patricks Day, ALONE is highlighting one of the less obvious effects of emigration on our society. ALONE report that the continued high levels of emigration, particularly of our young people, is leaving thousands of older people without familial support systems they once had.

ALONE report that the full impact of the mass emigration from Ireland in recent years, with figures currently standing at 170 people leaving every day, has not yet been realised and caution that we will continue to see the negative effects on our society and older people long into the future.

Currently in Ireland, almost 1 in 3 older people live on their own (29%), and 7-9% of older people suffer from chronic loneliness.

ALONE have found that if an older person's support system disappears it can affect them both socially and emotionally. Older people who are isolated don't always have the capacity to engage in community activities and stay involved and without outside assistance issues like lack of transport or decreased physical mobility can cause them to remain in their home.

ALONE believe that older people should stay living in the community for as long as possible as this is where many older people are happiest, but without the support to do so, many will prematurely move to a nursing home where they are segregated from the community and life they knew.

Sean Moynihan, Chief Executive Officer of ALONE said, "Loneliness is a real health issue, it's as damaging to health as smoking and obesity. At ALONE we strive to keep older people living within the community by stepping in and providing supports where they are needed".

He continued, "We are now developing a *National Befriending Network* of Befriending Services for older people across the county to share learning and set quality standards. The *Befriending Service* is a model that works because it is cost effective, and represents the community looking after its own".

This St Patrick's Day ALONE are asking emigrants to remember older people left at home who may be feeling isolated. If you are concerned for someone back home in Ireland you can contact ALONE on 01 679 1032 and we can offer support, or link them in with relevant services in their own county, alternatively you can visit www.alone.ie