

“The provision of quality health care for older people is a right and a necessity”
ALONE comments on Crisis in Emergency Departments

Dublin, 21st January 2016 ALONE is asking the government to prioritise home care packages and community health care services for older people. In light of the recent resurgence of the A&E crisis ALONE are championing a nationwide plan to help reduce the high number of older people attending emergency departments.

CEO of ALONE, Sean Moynihan said, “Hospitals are currently seeing a high volume of people attending their emergency departments making it difficult to maintain a quality level of care. Often, older people are ending up in hospital unnecessarily, and we believe that this is due to a lack of support for older people in the community. ALONE are working to fill this gap and provide services that will support older people to age at home by investing €1 million nationally and we are calling on the government to support us in this.”

“In Ireland, we have a rapidly aging population and this naturally puts more pressure on the health system. As people get older they succumb to a range of chronic illnesses which require close monitoring and management. We should also note that there are 170,000 older Irish people living alone, which makes them vulnerable to isolation and ill health. This risk increases in winter when the nights are darker and the days are colder,” said Moynihan.

Moynihan continued, “ALONE have long been campaigning for better and more coordinated services at a local level, we believe that the current crisis in the A&E departments is a direct consequence of our government’s failure to address the lack of services in the community for older people. Latest figures from September’s HSE performance report show that there were 864 over 75’s waiting on trolleys for over 24hours with a further 609 delayed discharges, with older persons trapped in hospital due to lack of services.”

“In our pre election submission to all parties we called for the development of a national infrastructure of support for older people. We have also called for immediate action on planning for the housing needs for older people, by looking at various international models that have proven successful. Both these initiatives will take huge pressure off the health system, and cost a fraction of the amount wasted on short term solutions to address acute hospital and nursing home beds.”

Moynihan concluded, “Healthcare for our ageing population should be a major priority for the next government. If older people are supported at home and in the community, they are less dependent on hospital services. The provision of quality health care for older people is a right and a necessity.”

ALONE provides Support Coordination to older people across the country to age at home. They also provide a befriending service to older people who are isolated, along with providing supportive housing to over 100 older people.

For those who have concerns about their own wellbeing, or the wellbeing of an older person in the community, ALONE can be contacted on (01) 679 1032.