

ALONE awarded first Quality Standard for Befriending Service in Ireland

Befriending service helping older people to remain independent in their own homes

Dublin, 28th January 2016 ALONE are delighted to announce that they are the first Irish Befriending organisation to receive the "Quality in Befriending Award", an internationally recognised standard developed by Befriending Networks Ltd in Scotland. ALONE's Befriending Services provides companionship to older people who are socially isolated through a weekly volunteer visit. With previous Quality Standards in ISO and Investing in Volunteers, this brings the number of Quality Standards achieved by ALONE to three.

Sean Moynihan, CEO of ALONE, commented "Part of ALONE's overall goal to ensure that all services are quality assured and Befriending is a vital part of these services. We are passionate in ALONE about ensuring that the services we deliver are to the highest standard. There was no Befriending quality award in Ireland and as a result we linked in with Befriending Network's Ltd in the UK. As 1 in 3 older people in Ireland live on their own, and 1 in 10 suffer from chronic loneliness, it is vitally important that we are visiting, supporting and advocating for vulnerable older persons. Loneliness is a serious health issue and is proven to be as damaging to health as smoking and obesity, however Befriending is a proven health intervention."

Moynihan continued, "We were particularly delighted to receive such positive feedback regarding our focus on meeting the needs of the older person. We believe befriending should complement mainstream health services and can help older people remain independent in their own homes. ALONE hosts Befriending Networks Ireland and currently provides support and training to almost 40 other Befriending organisations across the country. We look forward to developing the service further to ensure that all older people who require it will have access to a quality assured befriending service."

The accreditation process, carried out by Befriending Networks Ltd in the UK, covers nine practice areas relating to the effective operation of a befriending service including competency in volunteer recruitment, vetting, induction, training, matching and supervision. In addition to volunteer management the application also audited assessment processes, risk management, governance, monitoring and evaluation.

For those who have concerns about their own wellbeing, or the wellbeing of a vulnerable older person in the community, ALONE can be contacted on (01) 679 1032. To make a donation and help aid ALONE's work visit www.alone.ie. Befriending organisations can also get in touch for advice on how to join the network.