

Introduction to ALONE.

ALONE is a national organisation that provides services to older people who need support to age at home. We work with all older people but focus on those who have difficulties. We support them and link them in with essential local services and the support they need to live at home for as long as possible. All our services are quality approved. 100% of all donations go directly to providing services to older people in need.

We provide Support Coordination, Befriending, Supportive Housing and Campaigning services to hundreds of older people every week. Our services address the four core aims of the National Positive Ageing Strategy. **Our priority is for all older people to have access to services to help them age at home.**

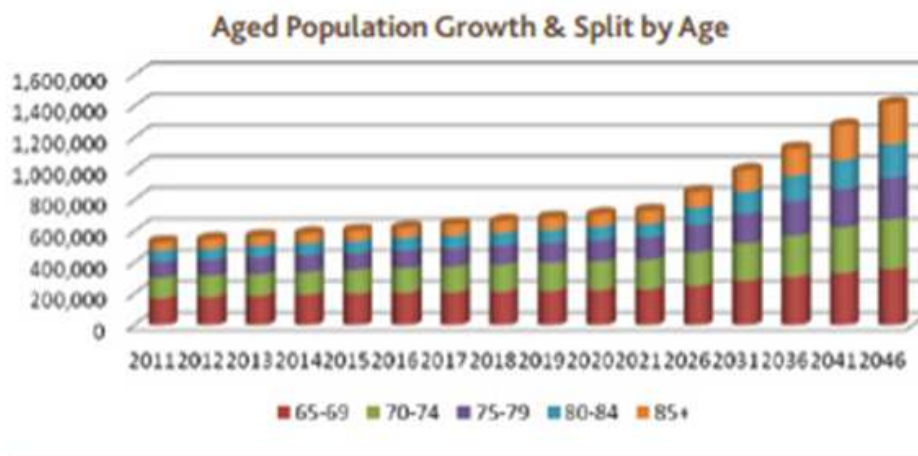
Summary of what we are calling for in manifestos and any program for government

1. A Minister to plan for the Ageing Demographic crisis and implement The National Positive Ageing Strategy
2. Infrastructure of Coordinated Support and Housing Options to help older people age at home
3. A Triple Lock Pension Structure to ensure that older people are protected from poverty
4. A plan to consolidate and develop the non-profit / charity/ voluntary / community age sector as a national partner with the statutory sector to deliver the National Ageing Strategy and address the Ageing Demographic

1) A Minister to plan for the Ageing Demographic crisis and implement The National Positive Ageing Strategy

Our population is ageing at an alarming rate. In the next 30 years the over 65's age group will treble and in the next 5 years the number of over 85's will increase by 46%

(Infographic)



This will obviously have huge implications for the government and society as a whole with regards to health, housing, social transfers, community structure and security. In the light of the coming crisis, long-term planning and solutions are vital.

Policy Recommendation 1: Appoint a Minister to Plan for the Demographic Crisis

We are calling for a Minister with sole responsibility for our rapidly ageing demographic to play one of the most important roles in the next and future governments. S/he would drive the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy and ensure innovative thinking and proper planning for effective solutions and quality services.

2) Infrastructure of Coordinated Support and Housing Options to help older people age at home

A key priority in the coming demographic crisis will mean coordinating the skills and resources to support many older people to age at home. In the current system 5% of all older people go into nursing homes. This position will not be sustainable as the ageing demographic increases - we would need to be adding 1000 extra nursing home bed-spaces a year for the next 30 years.

Many older people currently go into nursing homes not because they need maximum care, but because they do not have sufficient supports to stay at home. We believe that a lot can be done to help older people age at home by working with them and by coordinating services and through the use of technology. Older people remaining at home for as long as possible is of benefit to the community, the individual and the economy.

We want to properly plan and build with others an infrastructure for our ageing population which will include a range of options that are more cost effective by addressing gaps in the current continuum of care.

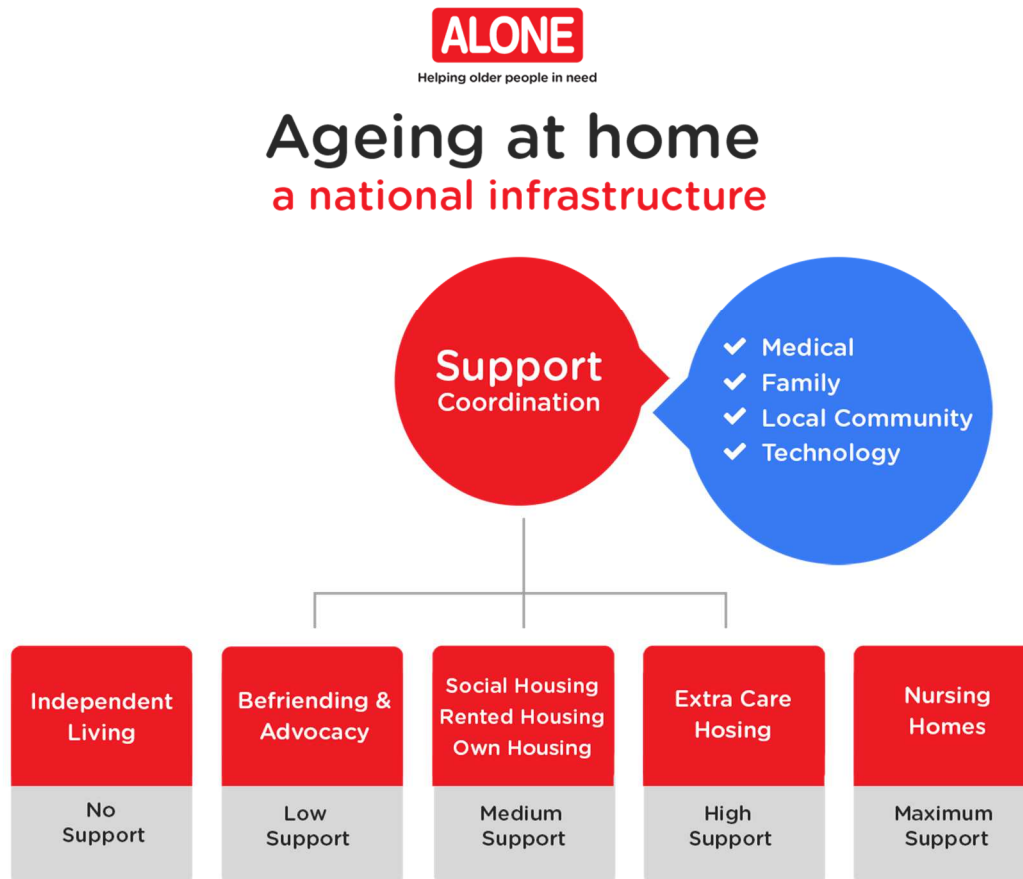
2.1) An Infrastructure to support older people to age at home.

The National Positive Ageing Strategy that prioritizes as a Goal to Enable people to age with confidence, security and dignity in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

Yet there is no long-term planning for an infrastructure to support this Goal, given the increasing complexity of health, housing and other practical needs that older people face as they age.

ALONE has a track record of almost 40 years supporting older people to age at home. We have done a great deal of research and consultation on the infrastructure that will be needed and we have already piloted a model through our own service delivery. We are now about to invest 1 million euro into this area over the next three years. Some organisations call this work advocacy. We call it Support Coordination because it embraces a wide range of supports across a continuum of care that varies and changes according to older peoples' situation and their needs as they grow older.

What does the Support Coordination Service look like?



Support Coordination Service in Action



Managed by professional staff with the ever increasing use and benefit of technology, this Support Coordination Service coordinates the local supports an older person needs to retain their independence. It is an inexpensive and effective way to support the older person's independence, choice and autonomy because it maximizes and integrates statutory and voluntary sector supports as shown in the graphic below. ALONE currently provides this Support Coordination Service through its office in Dublin and also in partnership with Cluid and Oprah. So the model is already tried and tested.

Benefits of Support Coordination Service

- Cost effective - There are countless services funded by several government departments as well as many offered by the voluntary sector. This is about them all working together
- This service prevents people going in to nursing homes too early
- This service maximizes service delivery at a local level
- This service operates in any housing regardless who owns it

- This services meets all government policy and four core aims of National Ageing Strategy
- This service will help with the discharge of older people from hospitals who currently do not have adequate support to be allowed home.

Current Gaps and Solutions

- Support Coordination / advocacy is currently only done by NGO's
- No national model or standards
- No national infrastructure
- The ALONE model could easily be replicated using regional or county level Support Coordination Centres / Hubs to deliver an accessible service nationwide.

Policy Recommendation 2: An Infrastructure to Support Older People Stay at home

We are calling for investment in a National Infrastructure to deliver a national Support Coordination Service that is accessible to all older people to help them age at home in order to implement Goal 3 of the National Positive Ageing Strategy.

2.2 Housing for older people

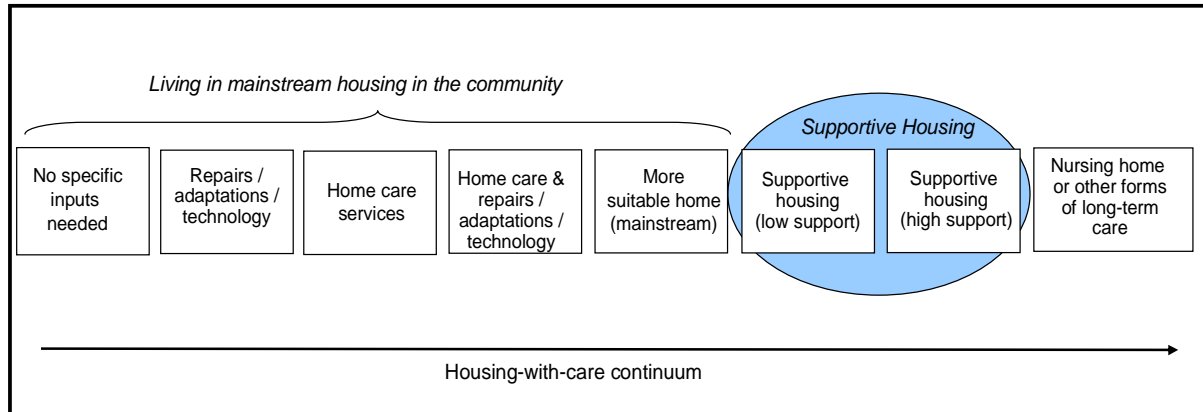
Social housing v Private rented

20% of older people in Ireland currently live in private rented accommodation and this is due to increase to 30%. With their fixed income older people are unable to compete in an ever increasing rental market and often face evictions from landlords looking to sell or increase the rent.

We believe that older people are the next big housing crisis. We believe that the private sector is not set up to meet the growing demographic. Support Co-ordination should be available to all older people including those in social housing, private rented and those living in their own homes who can sometimes struggle to maintain their homes to an appropriate living standard due to lack of funds or lack of capacity.

A consistent national grant system needs to be put in place with clear priorities and an assessment system.

Extra Care and Extra Supportive Housing Options



There is a body of evidence that points to a gap in the provision of supports/ housing options to allow people to remain at home instead of going into nursing home care unnecessarily.

We believe that the development of quality options in Extra Care and Extra Supportive Housing, at a fraction of the cost of nursing homes, can cater for those thousands of older people with low to medium support needs.

The cost of Housing Supports with 24 hour staffing is as little as 25% of the same care provided in nursing homes. It also frees up family housing and being pensions into our towns

- Extra care housing in most cases should be a home for life
- Extra care is not just for people on the verge of nursing home care but a philosophy for social housing of older people
- Extra care developments can cater for older people in need of social housing, low support & high support social housing
- Models of Extra care housing are inevitable for financial reasons in Ireland

Policy Recommendation 3: Plan for the Housing Needs of Older People

- Invest in the development of Extra Care Housing models in this country to reduce dependence on nursing homes in a cost-efficient manner
- Ensure that older people should be allocated a higher %all social housing
- Change the current CAS and calf system need to change as they are no longer fit for purpose for development of older peoples housing.
- Make sure the grant system to help people age at home is consistent and demand driven
- To build the capacity of the AHB'S to house older people who need support

3) A Triple Lock Pension structure to ensure that older people are protected from poverty

Currently over 80% of older people live on the basic pension. This is just above the poverty line. Cumulative cuts from austerity budgets has made those who receive the state pension struggle financially as additional charges, tax increases and inflation affect their weekly income. We would ask the government to inflation proof the state pension in the years ahead by implementing the triple lock model which has proven particularly successful in the UK and elsewhere. The triple lock model of pension increases will mean once a year the state pension will be raised in accordance with either the higher of the growth in average earnings, the Consumer Price Index (CPI), or by 2.5%. A commitment to this Triple Lock Model would end the yearly calls for pension increases and give older people fair financial independence.

Policy Recommendation 4: Ensure that the old-age pension is inflation-proof

Adopt the Triple Lock Pension model structure used in the UK to ensure that the old-age pension is not devalued.

Increase in the state Pension – The Triple Lock Model

ALONE are calling for a state pension increase by implementing the triple lock model which has proven successful in the UK and elsewhere. The triple lock model of pension increases will mean once a year the state pension will be raised in accordance with either the higher of the growth in average earnings, the Consumer Price Index (CPI), or by 2.5%. While the pension has not been changed since 2009, this does not mean that older people have not been affected by the recession. Cumulative cuts from continuous austerity budgets has made those who receive the state pension struggle financially as additional charges, tax increases and inflation effect their weekly income. The current Non Contributory state pension is just above the poverty line leaving no margin for any additional or unexpected bills. A commitment to this Triple Lock Model would end the yearly calls for pension increases and give older people fair financial independence.

4) The consolidation and development of NGO (charity) age sector

The non-profit charity ageing sector makes a huge contribution through social housing provision, befriending services and other support and advocacy services. Given the coming demographic crisis there is a vital role that only NGO, community and volunteer based services can deliver to older people such as Befriending and Support Coordination. However there is currently no national body to represent this sector and maximize the opportunity to work in partnership with the state to plan for the coming demographic crisis.

ALONE is committed to making a contribution to this sectoral development. The benefits of this would be:

1. National training and quality standards can be developed and implemented – this is essential for work with vulnerable adults
2. Services can be tracked and evaluated, providing national data for research and future evidenced-based planning
3. Learning and best practice can be shared and replicated
4. Economies of scale can be implemented
5. National policy and partnerships can be developed through cohesive and inclusive structures

ALONE has already taken a lead in the area of Befriending by developing and hosting a national network. We are also developing common practice and models of Housing and Support Coordination.

Befriending Network Ireland (BNI)

Currently 1/3 of all older people in Ireland live alone. This number is increasing and presents health risks. Loneliness has been proven to shorten your life and damage your health and yet is preventable. Befriending Services are vital to alleviating the negative impacts of loneliness and support older people to age in the community. We established the national Befriending Network Ireland in consultation with almost 40 organisations from around the country. ALONE is currently delivering training to the network and working to develop quality standards as ALONE hold a quality standard in volunteer management and befriending services.

Policy Recommendation 5- The development of the NGO Ageing Sector

Support the development of national networking, training, quality standards, and research to ensure that the NGO Ageing sector has representative structures at national level to oversee its work and play its part in the coming demographic crisis.

Summary of *Recommendations* we are calling for in manifestos and any program for government:

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