

Huge increase in demand for ALONE's services during 2012

Today ALONE published its 2012 figures detailing a 25% surge in demand for its services last year. This follows an increase in demand of 50% in the previous year. The rate of increase in calls for assistance to ALONE has continued to escalate in recent years and is a consistent strain on the charity's limited resources. The charity receives no state funding for day-to-day services. The most frequent request for assistance from callers was in relation to housing issues, with these calls representing double the number of any other issue.

The calls to the charity requesting assistance range across a broad number of issues, including older people living in sub-standard housing conditions; suffering with physical ill-health or disability and mental health issues; loneliness and isolation; those in debt or poverty, or struggling to make ends meet on reducing incomes. Housing related issues that ALONE has dealt with include housing in poor condition or not age friendly; older people at risk of homelessness requesting housing; those facing harassment or abuse in their current home and require housing; mobility issues resulting in isolation at home.

Commenting on the figures, ALONE CEO Seán Moynihan stressed that, "Despite the increase in demand for our services, we're reiterating our commitment to maintaining a consistent quality of service for the 1-in-10 older people in need of assistance and to extending these services where necessary. On any average day our small number of staff and dedicated volunteers provide direct services to 330 older people in need. Our resources are fully stretched as a result of this significant increase in demand for services which shows no sign of slowing."

He continued, "Housing continues to be the main issue for those in need who call us. There is a huge demand for our housing, with almost 50 people viewing each of our houses available during 2012. This is showing that there is clearly a gap in social housing services for those aged between 55 and 70. We're tackling this by supplying housing based on a transparent assessment of the need of the individual. During December we housed five older people in age friendly homes, with another two to be housed before the end of February. It's crucial that older people are given the opportunity to age well in their own homes, as this means they are living more fulfilled lives within a community."

The ALONE Befriending Service ensures weekly visits for over 300 older people who would otherwise be isolated and lonely. ALONE Housing provides maintained homes for life, with dedicated staff support, for 100 older people who would otherwise face homelessness. The charity's Community Response Service carries out over 30 emergency interventions every month for older people in crisis. The charity has 130 Garda-vetted volunteers, who provided an estimate 10,000 hours of time to the charity during 2012, which would have a value of €210,000 based on the average industrial wage. "With the increased number of calls, we are seeing the reality that there are a large number of older people trying to live on the State pension and are being severely impacted by continued cuts and charges. This is having the very real

impact of leaving them in poverty and increasingly in need of our assistance. We are concerned about the possibility of continued cutbacks impacting older people, in particular where they are applied as blanket measures without regard for the personal circumstances of individuals already in need,” concluded Seán Moynihan.

Older people with concerns about their wellbeing can contact ALONE on (01) 679 1032 or on www.alone.ie.