

ALONE appeals for continued vigilance on elder abuse

June 14th 2013: ALONE has called for continued vigilance from the public, service providers and government on the rising incidence of elder abuse in Ireland. The call coincides with World Elder Abuse awareness day, which takes place to highlight the issue. According to a report on the National Study of Elder Abuse and Neglect, published by the National Centre for the Protection of Older People (NCPOP), reported incidents of elder abuse have continuously increased since 2009.



The charity notes that in light of recent reports of cases of neglect and elder abuse by some in the home help sector, continued vigilance is essential. Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE commented “With resources being continuously strained it is everyone’s duty to report incidents of suspected elder abuse. This can take a number of forms, be it physical, emotional or financial and is a cause of extreme distress for the victim.”

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day will take place on June 15th. This day is observed annually worldwide to create awareness and understanding of the issue of elder abuse in society. It serves to remind the public, government and service providers to be vigilant in day to day work watching out for signs of possible abuse as well as checking practices and behaviour to minimise risk to older people.

Seán Moynihan continued “ALONE urges people to be aware of the risk factors of abuse and report it if there is a suspected case of abuse. During times of austerity, it can often happen that vulnerable people feel that they must endure more hardship and as a result not report abuse. It’s more important than ever that there’s an ongoing concerted effort to protect the rights of older people.”

Elder abuse is defined as “A single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person or violates their human and civil rights.” This definition applies to people aged 65 and over and includes inadequacies of care or inappropriate care – it excludes self neglect and crime by strangers. According to research carried out by NCPOP, people with lower levels of education and lower incomes were more likely to have experienced mistreatment compared to those with higher levels of education, higher incomes, and non-manual employment. People with poor levels of community or family support reported a higher prevalence of abuse or neglect.

Commenting on recent reports by the HSE on incidents of abuse and neglect within the home help sector, Moynihan noted that “Elder abuse is carried out by individuals who are known to the victim, making it more distressing and shocking and more difficult to report. Continued advocacy is required to ensure that public policy remains focused on the needs of older adults, adults with dementia and adults in danger of abuse. In order to

effectively combat elder abuse there must be leadership from government, service providers, other institutions and older people themselves and the organisations that represent them.”

He concluded, “Many of the risk factors associated with elder abuse and neglect will increase in Irish society over the coming decades given the rapidly ageing population. It’s essential that a strategy is drafted by government to deal with the multitude of issues that an ageing population will face.” The CSO projects that the number of over-65s will double by 2026 to 909,000. ALONE is calling on the government to live up to its promise to take a pragmatic approach to the ageing Irish population.

The HSE National Elder Abuse Steering Committee, established in 2007, oversees the HSE’s elder abuse service nationally and works to ensure that the recommendations contained within *Protecting our Future*, as well as the review of that report in 2009 –*Protecting our Future, Review of the Recommendations of the Report of the Working Group on Elder Abuse*– are implemented. The National Centre for the Protection of Older People was founded to measure the prevalence of elder abuse in Ireland.

ALONE provides assistance to older people in need of support through a befriending service, permanent housing provision, an emergency response service and campaigns on issues affecting older people in need. Older people in need of support can contact ALONE on (01) 679 1032.