

20th February 2025

Dear Ms. Brogan,

I hope you are keeping well. Thank you for your previous communication with ALONE regarding the mental health of older people in Ireland in relation to *Sharing the Vision*. Your support is greatly appreciated.

We eagerly anticipate the publication of the new *Sharing the Vision* Implementation Plan in April. Given Ireland's ageing population and the acknowledged shortage of mental health care provision for older people, we believe it is essential that the mental health requirements of older people receive due attention as part of this new plan.

As highlighted in previous correspondence, we strongly advocate for the inclusion of actions related to Recommendation 12 in the upcoming plan. We appreciate your response to our 2023 inquiry, noting that the Commission on Care has taken responsibility for advancing a Positive Ageing Strategy, with NIMC overseeing progress. As previously noted, the *National Positive Ageing Strategy*, introduced in 2013, remains the primary policy framework for older people in Ireland. As you are aware, the Commission on Care has been tasked with examining the full remit of health and social care services for older people. Unfortunately, according to the published minutes, the Commission on Care—of which our CEO, Seán Moynihan, is a member—has so far convened only once to discuss community-based services for older people, with only a small proportion of this meeting dedicated to mental health. Furthermore, the Commission has yet to complete its first module of work, with a framework for the strategic development of health and social care services and supports for older people expected only after the completion of module 2. Meeting minutes and agendas for the Commission on Care can be accessed [here](#).

The Chair of the Commission has assured our CEO, Seán Moynihan, that the Commission's work should not delay the advancement of strategies or policies related to the health and social care needs of older people. **Therefore, we strongly urge NIMC to proceed with necessary actions on older people's mental health rather than waiting for the Commission's conclusions. Specifically, we request that actions relating to Recommendation 12 be incorporated into the forthcoming *Sharing the Vision* Implementation Plan.**

We also believe that the mental health needs of older people should be addressed across multiple recommendations within *Sharing the Vision*. For example:

- Recommendation 46 calls for an expert group to be set up to examine acute inpatient bed usage and develop recommendations, ALONE would urge that this group take into account the significant shortage of acute inpatient beds for older people as outlined in Dr Susan Finnerty's 2020 report for the Mental Health Commission¹.
- **Recommendation 16** emphasises the need for access to a range of counselling supports and talk therapies based on identified need across the lifespan. We stress the importance of ensuring that older people have adequate access to these services.

As a key measure to support these and other related actions, we advocate for the establishment of a dedicated workstream to drive efforts focused on older people's mental health under *Sharing the Vision*.

ALONE remains committed to supporting NIMC in any way possible in this crucial work. We look forward to reviewing the new Implementation Plan and commend you and NIMC on your ongoing efforts.

Kind regards,

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¹ See 'Mental Health Services for Older People' report, 2020, available online here:

<https://www.mhcirl.ie/sites/default/files/2023-06/Mental-Health-Services-for-Older-People-Report-2020.pdf>