**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12th 2018**

**TOMMY FLEMING TO PERFORM AT CELEBRATORY ALZTALKS EVENT IN SLIGO WITH TOUCHING REAL LIFE STORIES FROM PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA AND CARERS**

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI) is delighted that the legendary Tommy Fleming has agreed to perform at its annual celebratory AlzTalks event that will feature a number of touching real life stories from people with dementia and carers to the Hawk’s Well Theatre in Sligo on Thursday, October 25th (Doors open at 6.30pm for a 7.00pm start).

The eclectic free event, which has been held in Dublin and Cork in previous years, looks to shatter the stigma and misconceptions that often surround dementia and will mix personal testimonies with music and performance.

Dementia advocate Helen Rochford Brennan, who is from Tubbercurry in Co Sligo, will be the ambassador for the event.

Helen was diagnosed with Early Onset Alzheimer’s in July 2012. Helen is the current Chairperson of the European Working Group of People with Dementia and is the group’s nominee to the Board of Alzheimer Europe; she is former Chair of the Irish Dementia Working Group and continues to sit on the steering committee.

Speakers on the night will include members of our Irish Dementia Working Group (IDWG) Jacinta Dixon (Dublin), Kevin Quaid (Limerick) and members of our Dementia Carers Campaign Network (DCCN) Rachel McMahon (Limerick) and Helena Quaid (Cork).

Musical acts for the AlzTalks event include members of Dervish and other local musicians.

There are 857 people living with dementia in Sligo.

Booking is advised for this free event and tickets are available on [www.hawkswell.com/events](http://www.hawkswell.com/events)

**AlzTalks Ambassador and Dementia Advocate Helen Rochford Brennan said:**

“I feel very privileged to be able to have the annual celebratory AlzTalks event to my home town of Sligo. It’s really a great honour for me. The event aims to bring dementia out of the shadows and gives both people with dementia and family carers an opportunity to share their own experiences and to have their own voice heard. This is so important.

“I remember the shock the day that I received my diagnosis and the long lonely drive home from Galway to Sligo wondering how I was going to tell my family. I don’t remember the conversation that day with my family - but I do remember the pain. The dark place that I was in those early days of my diagnosis reminds me of the importance people being open about their experiences and to not be afraid of fighting on and having a good a life as possible.

“With wonderful advocates and music we really want the Sligo public to get behind this wonderful event and show their local support on the night. The tickets are free – please do come along and support this eclectic event and support people with dementia and their families in Ireland.”

**The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Head of Advocacy & Public Affairs, Tina Leonard said:**

“We are very excited to bring our annual AlzTalks event to Sligo this year. The general public needs to hear about the personal stories of people with dementia and their carers to help bring the subject of dementia, which is often not spoken about in Ireland, into the public domain.

“All of the presentations from this event will be added to our AlzTalks YouTube channel which has been created to bring dementia out of the shadows and enable the many different voices of dementia to be heard all over the world.

“This provides a platform to allow awareness-building and perception-changing of dementia, given that a lack of understanding and stigma is still rife. Having people speak about their own lives and experiences creates a better understanding of the unique experiences of people living with dementia.”

**Further Information:**

For all media enquiries, please contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Communications Manager Cormac Cahill on 086 0441 214.

**Notes to the Editor:**
**● About Helen Rochford Brennan**

Helen is on the Monitoring Committee of Ireland’s first National Dementia Strategy, she is also an Alzheimer type of Dementia Consultant and a Global Dementia Ambassador. Helen campaigns to raise awareness of dementia through a Rights based approach, speaking at international conference’s, gives many media interviews, engages with pharma, scientists, clinicians, educators, students and many research projects from developing evidence –based diagnosis to palliative care.

Helen was diagnosed after a five year struggle with Early Onset Alzheimer’s at the age of 62 and has since written very personally about living with Alzheimer type of dementia, this year she has contributed to two books on rights. She hopes her participation in research will one day help find a cure and better quality of life for people living with dementia.

Throughout Helen’s life she has been a Rights and Social Justice Campaigner and today advocates for the Rights of people with Dementia in particular Alzheimer’s.

**● The Alzheimer Society of Ireland**

The ASI is the national leader in advocating for and providing dementia-specific supports and services and each year the organisation provides more than one million hours of community-based dementia-specific care throughout Ireland.

The ASI provides the following services:

• National Helpline

• Social Clubs

• Support Groups

• Day Care Services

• Home Care

• Dementia Advisor Service

• Mobile Information Bus

Helpline: The Alzheimer Society of Ireland National Helpline is open six days a week Monday to Friday 10am–5pm and Saturday 10am–4pm on 1800 341 341.

Website: www.alzheimer.ie

Twitter: @alzheimersocirl @DCCNIRL

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheAlzheimerSocietyofIreland/

**About dementia:**

• The number of people with dementia in Ireland is expected to more than double over the next 20 years, from 55,000 today to 113,000 in 2036.

• Dementia is an umbrella term used to describe a range of conditions which cause changes and damage to the brain.

• Dementia is progressive. There is currently no cure. Dementia is not simply a health issue but a social issue that requires a community response.

• The majority of people with dementia (63%) live at home in the community. Over 180,000 people in Ireland are currently or have been carers for a family member or partner with dementia with many more providing support and care in other ways.

• Each year over 4,000 people develop dementia. That’s at least 11 people every day and anyone can get dementia - even people in their 30s/40s/50s.

• 1 in 10 people diagnosed with dementia in Ireland is under 65.

• The overall cost of dementia care in Ireland is just over €1.69 billion per annum; 48% of this is attributable to family care; 43% is accounted for by residential care; formal health and social care services contribute only 9% to the total cost

• Figures referenced to Cahill, S. & Pierce, M. (2013) The Prevalence of Dementia in Ireland