**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – FRIDAY, AUGUST 3rd 2018**

**HIGH COURT ORDER PREVENTING PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA FROM LEAVING HOSPITAL INDICATIVE OF BROKEN DEMENTIA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM**

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI) is extremely concerned about recent media reports regarding a High Court order preventing people with dementia from leaving hospital and believes that these cases are indicative of a broken healthcare system for people with dementia and clearly shows that further investment in community supports and services is needed across Ireland.

The ASI has been campaigning on an ongoing basis for the Government to fund more community supports and services for people with dementia and their family carers across Ireland as a matter of urgency in order to prevent crises situations such as these from taking place.

ASI Head of Advocacy and Public Affairs Tina Leonard said: “These recent cases also shows that a culture change is now required in how people with dementia are treated, perceived and reported on; the stigmatising language that is often used in relation to people with dementia has a dehumanising impact on the individuals concerned”.

She added: “The ASI has complete empathy for the families of the persons living with dementia and hospital staff in these particular cases; they too are a victims of the inadequate provision from the healthcare system that is in place to support people living with dementia and those caring for them”.

The situation whereby the State is obtaining permission to detain people living with dementia in an environment without their control or consent is deeply worrying. There is extensive evidence to indicate that the behaviours described in these cases can be initiated by change in the environment of the person with dementia, a change in caregiving staff or a frightening experience.

Members of the public will often assume that the so-called problem or difficulty lies within the person with dementia when, in fact, very often there is an unmet need. Their symptoms may be because of a general health problem such as discomfort caused by pain or infection, their environment and care the person is receiving, or a direct result of changes in their brain. Research has shown that people with dementia have many sensory problems for which the acute care environment is not suitable.

**The recent cases in the media pose a number of worrying questions:**

● Why is there such a use stigmatising language towards people living with dementia?

● Is the person actually medically unwell and requiring the type of care that is only available in an acute hospital setting or are they there because there is no other facility to meet their care needs?

● Are the staff at the hospital trained in the best practice in dementia care and familiar with a rights- based approach to dementia care?

● Were the reasons behind the person’s behaviour fully examined and were robust attempts made to support those behaviours?

● What is the care plan that is currently in place to meet the care needs of these individuals after they have been detained?

● How will the people living with dementia be prevented from leaving the hospital, will they be physically or chemically restrained?

**Member of the Irish Dementia Working Group (IDWG) and Chair of the European Working Group on People with Dementia (EWGPWD) Helen Rochford Brennan said: “This news makes me sad and scared. We had so much hype when Ireland introduced the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) legislation and signed up to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD – but what does that mean for people living with dementia? I know my dementia will progress; this could be me in time. But where are my human rights? Where is my voice? Where is my right to inclusion in society? Article 19 of the UNCRPD expressly enshrines the rights of people living with disabilities to live in communities whilst also promoting personalised services thereby creating a pathway of support that suits the person. Why have these rights not been afforded to the individuals living with dementia in these cases? Why have they no pathway of appropriate care?”**

**Member of our Dementia Carers Campaign Network (DCCN) Rachel McMahon said: “It affects the entire family; having to place a loved one into an acute facility is so distressing. Carers worry about the type of care their loved ones receive – an acute hospital is not an appropriate environment for a vulnerable person living with dementia. This must be a horrific situation for the families involved; I have the utmost sympathy for the position they have been put in by the Irish health service.”**

**Further Information:**

For all media enquiries, please contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Communications Manager Cormac Cahill on 0860441214.

**Notes to the Editor:**

**‘Dementia Specific Services in the Community: Mapping Public and Voluntary Services’:**

In September 2016, the National Dementia Office (NDO), Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI) partnered on a project to map dementia-specific community-based services nationally. The project supports the implementation of the National Dementia Strategy (NDS) under a commitment by the HSE to critically review health and personal social services for people with dementia to (i) identify gaps in existing provision, and (ii) prioritise areas for action in accordance with resource availability.

**The full report can be accessed via this link:** http://www.understandtogether.ie/news-and-events/news/Final-Report-Dementia-Specific-Services-Mapping-Project.pdf

**The Facts 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 are 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

**Ends**