**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Wednesday 28th NOVEMBER 2018**

**THE ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF IRELAND HOLD EMERGENCY DEMENTIA SUMMIT CALLING ON GOVERNMENT TO HEAR THE OUTCRY FOR DEMENTIA-SPECIFIC FUNDING IN THE HSE NATIONAL SERVICE PLAN.**

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI) is holding an Emergency Dementia Summit (EDS) in Dublin today calling on the Minister for Health Simon Harris and Minister for Older People Jim Daly to make good on their public statements that ‘dementia is a key priority’ by directing urgently needed funds to dementia-specific services, in the 2019 HSE National Service Plan, which is to be announced shortly.

The time for platitudes has long since passed. In Budget 2019, the Government yet again ignored the shameful fact that people living with dementia in Ireland are being deprived of a basic minimum standard of care, as evidenced by the recent mapping of dementia services undertaken by the ASI in conjunction with the HSE.

People living with dementia and family carers have travelled from all over the country to the Emergency Summit in Buswells Hotel, Dublin to have their stories heard and demand that the Government make good on their promises to allocate specific funds to the provision of dementia care services.

“I’ve been a carer for over 13 years”, explained Rachel McMahon from Limerick, a member of the Dementia Carers Campaign Network. “I cared for my father who passed away in 2012 and today I’m caring for my grandmother and very little has changed since his diagnosis in 2005. When I’ve reached out to members of the government for their views on what supports should be needed or required I get a very copy and paste answer about concerns and how important these resources are but there needs to be a lot more actions and a lot less talk.”

Following the Government decision to yet again overlook this vital budget allocation, the ASI requested to meet with Minister Harris but was told the Minister “is unable to accede to your request”. Given that the ASI provides 68pc of all dementia specific services in the community, this refusal is shocking. Further, earlier this year at the opening of a dementia friendly garden in his Wicklow constituency, Minister Harris stood in front of people living with dementia and their family carers and told them: *“*It is our collective responsibility to ensure that people with dementia are recognised and valued and are offered as much support as possible to ensure that they live their lives as fully as possible.”

In addition, Minister Daly, during a Dáil debate in June said, "I want more resources to be invested in dementia services. There are no two ways about it, but dementia is the challenge of our time. We as a political body must respond in kind and up our game when it comes to resourcing the provision of services for the significantly increasing number of people affected by dementia on a daily basis."

The ASI, together with people with dementia and family carers, is asking Ministers Harris and Daly to show citizens of Ireland that they mean what they say.

Pat McLoughlin, ASI CEO said: “We are fed up listening to our Ministers saying that dementia is a key priority for them, but watch them continue to ignore our calls for ring-fenced dementia-specific funding.

There are thousands of families up and down the country who have been struggling to access basic minimum level of supports and services for loved ones with dementia, and as a society we are failing to provide these people with the supports they need”.

We are holding this Emergency Dementia Summit to highlight the urgent need for funds for dementia-specific supports. We will not stop advocating on behalf of all the people and families facing a dementia diagnosis.”

The Summit starts in Buswells hotel before moving over to Leinster House to a forum hosted by the All Party Oireachtas Group on Dementia, where participants, including carers and those living with dementia, will share their stories and how the lack of resources impacts heavily on their daily lives. All members of the Oireachtas have been invited to attend.

“We’re at crisis point. We deserve better than this. Much better”, added carer Rachel McMahon, stating that the lack of resources is “nothing short of devastating and to be honest, insulting, for people with dementia and their carers”.

**For media queries please contact ASI Communications Officer, Lisa Gernon on 086 105 1590 or** **lisa.gernon@alzheimer.ie** **or Vivienne Gleeson on 086 347 5511**

**NOTES TO THE EDITOR**

**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*

**ASI Pre-Budget Submission 2019 asks:**

**• €7.415 million for a minimum standard of community services in each county**

The National Dementia Strategy committed to identifying gaps in existing provision and prioritise areas for action. The HSE and the ASI mapped dementia specific community services across Ireland and found acute inequity of service between the counties. This clear geographic lottery shows that without delay funding must be provided so that each county can offer a minimum standard of community services.

**• €2.31 million to roll out a Dementia Adviser service across Ireland**

Dementia Advisers support individuals and their families throughout their dementia journey. In the absence of a pathway of care, evidence shows that their advice and support is crucial.

There are only 8 Dementia Advisers covering 11 counties and demand is increasing, fueled by a growth in awareness due to the HSE’s Understand Together campaign.

**• €2.24 million to provide Key Workers in every HSE Local Health Office**

The National Dementia Strategy outlines a need for the coordinated care of each person with dementia and that continuity of care is promoted. The role of Key Worker is of paramount importance to assisting people to navigate complex care pathways and promoting a collaborative management plan for individual dementia care. It would be critical in supporting and facilitating an integrated approach to dementia care.

**• €852,000 for Dementia Inclusive Community Coordinators across Ireland**

The National Dementia Strategy emphasises the need for a ‘whole community response’ to dementia and the HSE’s Understand Together campaign provides the foundation for this Community Activation work. With that project nearing completion funding must be provided to continue to support the development of a dementia inclusive Ireland.

**‘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

**About The Alzheimer Society of Ireland:**

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (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. A national non-profit organisation, the ASI is person centred, rights-based and grassroots led with the voice of the person with dementia and their carer at its core. The ASI operates the Alzheimer National Helpline offering information and support to anyone affected by dementia and provides a number of others supports and services to people with dementia and their carers across Ireland including 51 Day Care Centres and one Respite Care Centre. The ASI also provides Home Care, Family Carer Training, Dementia Advisers, Alzheimer Cafes and Social Clubs.

**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.**