**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – THURSDAY, 14th FEBRUARY 2019**

**STRUGGLING CARER OF MOTHER WITH DEMENTIA WHO RANG JOE DUFFY SHOW FOR HELP STEPPING UP CAMPAIGN TO LOBBY GOVERNMENT TO FUND LOCAL DAY CARE CENTRE**

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is supporting a full-time carer to step up a campaign to encourage the Government to fund a desperately needed local day care centre for her mother who has dementia as there is no dementia-specific day care service available in their community.

Linda Van Der Westhuizen from Leixlip in Co Kildare, who works part-time as well as caring for her mother, Marie who is in her Seventies and was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s in 2011, rang RTE’s Joe Duffy Show in November to ask for help.

Since Linda rang the Joe Duffy Show, The ASI has helped Linda to avail of a two-day day care setting for her mother – but it’s located over 17km away in Curlew Road, Dublin 12. There are 1,129 people with dementia living in the community in Kildare, but there is currently no dementia-specific day care centre service in North Kildare. Linda and The ASI are trying to change that.

With the assistance of The ASI, Linda has set up a campaign to encourage the Government to open a day care centre close to her home and recently met with Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin and local TD Frank O’Rourke to discuss the lack of services in North Kildare and is looking to establish an ASI North Kildare Branch to take part in local lobbying and fundraising.

Linda is an only child and has no other family help to call on to help with her mother and is only receiving an hour and a half home care support each week. Linda says that the two-day placement in Dublin for her mother was a life-saver and she would have been forced to quit her job otherwise.

In Budget 2019, the Government yet again ignored the shamefulfact 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 which was completed by The ASI, the HSE and the National Dementia Office last year.

Linda believes that the time for platitudes has long since passed and the Government must finally fund more desperately needed dementia-specific services to help people Marie.

**Dementia Campaigner, Linda Van Der Westhuizen said:**

“I was really at my wits’ end and had nowhere else to go when I rang the Joe Duffy Show last November. I felt so disillusioned with the serious lack of services in North Kildare for people with dementia that I wanted to highlight my concerns and create awareness of the situation. Together with The ASI we have set up a campaign to encourage the Government to fund a local day care service in North Kildare, so people like me can avail of services in our own community and not have to travel to Dublin to access them.

“I was faced with just two options: either having to travel from the north of Kildare to the south of the County or to Dublin to avail of an ASI service. I decided that I would bring my mother up to Dublin for two days a week. This is not ideal, but I am very grateful for it. Otherwise I would have had to quit my job and my mother would be home at me the whole time. That wouldn’t have been good for me and it certainly wouldn’t have been good for her; my mother is like everyone else and needs to stay active in her community, needs social interaction and needs to be stimulated.

“People with dementia in north Kildare urgently need a dementia- specific day care centre in the North of Kildare to meet the demand and need of people living with dementia and their families. I don’t want her to be in full-time care, I want her to be at home with me. But it can be very frustrating to get all the supports you actually need to do this. We have heard a lot lately about how much dementia means to certain Minister – well now it’s time the Government actually showed some action.”

**The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Operations Manager for the South East, Mary Bardin said:**

“There are 1,129 people with dementia living with dementia in Kildare. These are people who are living at home and want to remain at home, in many instances they are being supported and cared for by loved ones to remain at home. Currently in the constituency of North Kildare people do not have access to a dementia specific day centre. This means that the person does not have access to a supportive environment where they are stimulated and carers do not get respite that is much needed from the caring role.

“The ASI run a day centre in South Kildare called Dunmurry Springs and are currently providing a service to 14 people with dementia and families which means that there is a huge number of families in Kildare who do not have access to this vital support. The ASI has so far received referrals for 12 families who are from North Kildare for Dunmurry Springs in South Kildare because there is no transport, so the demand is definitely there for the service.

“The findings of the mapping project last year show that there are gaps in service provision and inconsistency of availability of types of services by both county and Community Healthcare Organisations (CHO) area. We know that there are significant gaps in service provision and inconsistency of availability of types of services by both county and CHO area which were identified in our mapping project last year. The inequity of access to vital dementia-specific supports and services across Ireland must be addressed by the Government as a matter of urgency.”

**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:**

**● 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 also operates the Alzheimer National Helpline offering information and support to anyone affected by dementia at 1800 341 341 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.

**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*