**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Wednesday, May 8th 2019**

**CALL FOR LOCAL ELECTION CANDIDATES TO PROMOTE DEMENTIA-INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES AND SUPPORT PEOPLE IMPACTED BY DEMENTIA WHO ARE STRUGGLING ACROSS IRELAND**

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is calling on all candidates in the local elections to promote dementia-inclusive communities if successfully elected. This support from local representatives is desperately neededto help the 55,000 people living with dementia in our communities across Ireland.

The ASI has the body of evidence to prove that people living with dementia and their families are still dealing with inadequate services and supports. The 2018 mapping of dementia-specific services in Ireland shows that not only does access to community dementia-specific services vary depending on where you live but no county has even a minimum level of dementia support.

With dementia a growing issue and the majority of those with dementia living in the community, there is a need for a ‘whole community response’ to dementia.

Local councillors are working every day in their communities and are witnessing the issues families are facing so that is why The ASI is calling on local candidates, if elected, to:

1. Sign up and become a *Dementia: Understand Together* Community Champion at [www.understandtogether.ie](http://www.understandtogether.ie);
2. Engage with local dementia service providers to identify facilities where dementia inclusive initiatives can be held and link with other Community Champions to offer these;
3. Encourage public facing staff e.g. libraries to participate in dementia-awareness training

***The Alzheimer Society of Ireland CEO, Pat McLoughlin:***

“People with dementia and their family carers need their newly elected local representatives to play a key role in championing their rights in the years ahead and a community-wide response is needed to ensure that struggling families get better support and services. Dementia is one of the biggest health issues that this country faces. The sad reality is that people with dementia and their families are really struggling in each and every community in Ireland because they are being faced with inadequate services and supports.”

***Vice-Chair of the Irish Dementia Working Group (IDWG), Kathy Ryan said:***

“The vast majority of people diagnosed with dementia want to live in their own home and stay active in their own community. In order for this to happen we need our communities to become more dementia aware. When a community is dementia aware, it makes the difference between us living as well as possible or staying at home behind closed doors, which has a hugely negative impact on our health and wellbeing.

“I have experienced both awareness and ignorance in my local community Cashel and surrounding towns Thurles and Clonmel. There are businesses/shops/coffee shops etc I no longer use because of the reaction or inaction I received. Equally, it makes my life a lot easier when I shop and don’t have to explain again and again that I am losing the ability to count money or when I want to use a bathroom that requires a code and have difficulty remembering just four numbers.

“This is why these local elections are so very important. Newly elected local councillors can ensure that local communities make dementia a priority. The last time the local elections were held, in 2014, was when I received my diagnosis of Younger Onset Alzheimer’s, so this year’s elections have a special poignancy for me. I would encourage all election hopefuls to please get involved in this campaign – by everyone learning a little, you have the potential of helping us a lot.”

***Kinsale Dementia: Understand Together Community Champion, Linda Jordan said:***

“As a Dementia: Understand Together Community Champion, I want to ensure that the place I call home, Kinsale, is dementia inclusive.  This means I want to bring awareness to as many people in the community as possible, so that anyone with dementia can feel comfortable and safe walking down their own street, doing their shopping, participating in society and meeting friends.”

“In Ireland 11 people are diagnosed with dementia every day; this means it could be any one of us in the future.  My call to local Councillors is that we can’t wait to see if supports, resources and funds will be found, we must start by ensuring that our communities are doing all we can now. It’s not enough anymore to say that you want to do something, now is the time to act. We all have our part to play, by giving your support to the Dementia: Understand Together movement you can help spread the word to a far wider audience and inspire further action in our local communities.”

**Further Information:**

For all media enquiries, please contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Communications Officer Lisa Gernon on 086 029 5634 or email lisa.gernon@alzheimer.ie

**Notes to the Editor:**

**About The Alzheimer Society of Ireland**

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is the leading dementia specific service provider in Ireland. We work across the country in the heart of local communities providing dementia specific services and supports and advocating for the rights and needs of all people living with dementia and their caregivers. Our vision is an Ireland where people on the journey of dementia are valued and supported.

**About *Dementia: Understand Together***

*Dementia: Understand Together* is a public support, awareness and information campaign. It aims to inspire people from all sections of society to stand together with the 500,000 Irish people whose families have been affected by dementia. The campaign is led by the HSE, working with The Alzheimer Society of Ireland and Genio. The campaign is supported by over 40 partner organisations across Ireland, including in the retail, transport, banking, health, voluntary and community sectors. These organisations together with over 200 Community Champions are leading the way in creating communities that actively embrace and include those living with dementia and their families.

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

**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**