***\*Photos being issued to photo desks by Photocall Ireland***

**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – THURSDAY, MAY 2nd 2019**

**MINISTER FOR HEALTH SIMON HARRIS STATES ‘REALLY IMPORTANT WE DO EVERYTHING WE CAN’ TO RAISE AWARENESS OF DEMENTIA AT NATIONAL TEA PARTY TO CELEBRATE 25 YEARS OF ALZHEIMER’S TEA DAY**

Minister for Health Simon Harris TD highlighted the importance of raising awareness of dementia to help families around the country as he attended The Alzheimer Society of Ireland’s National Tea Party to mark the 25th Anniversary of Alzheimer’s Tea Day at the charity’s Orchard Day Care Centre in Blackrock, Co Dublin.

The Minister met with The ASI CEO Pat McLoughlin, Chair of Irish Dementia Working Group, Ronan Smith, staff, volunteers and supporters of The ASI as well as clients of The Orchard Day Care Centre as he vowed to support the ASI with their ‘vital work’ at this celebratory event.

*“The continued support of our work is crucial as we celebrate 25 years of Tea Day. However, there is a serious side to the day. People with dementia and their carers feel hurt that dementia is no longer mentioned as a chronic illness by the HSE, it isn’t mentioned in Slaintecare and there isn’t a single county in Ireland with a minimum range of services and supports,”* saidThe Alzheimer Society of Ireland CEO Pat McLoughlin.

Today, thousands of people around the country get involved with local Tea Day events in their homes, workplaces, schools, local community centres, parishes or somewhere special. The ASI is asking people to invite their friends, family, colleagues and neighbours to have a cuppa, a chat and maybe a treat or two.

Alzheimer’s Tea Day is the charity’s largest fundraising campaign and this year we are aiming to raise €500,000 to provide supports and services to help families living with dementia nationwide. The Tea Day campaign provides vital funds for truly important services, which include: nationwide day care centres, respite, home care, social clubs, carer support groups, Alzheimer cafés and the busy National Helpline.

There are an estimated 55,000 people living with dementia in Ireland. For every one person with dementia three others are directly affected. The number of people with dementia is expected to more than double over the next 20 years to 113,000 in 2039.

*“We can’t continue to provide existing services with 58% of funding from the HSE and having to rely each year on over €3m from the public and a further €2m from persons who attend the 70% of all dementia-specific services we provide for the state. We all recognise the personal commitment to dementia from the Minister from his public support in Wicklow and his attendance at awareness events. We look forward to continuing this conversation with the Minister and we really do appreciate his time today,” added CEO Pat McLoughlin.*

***The Minister for Health Simon Harris TD said:***

*"I am really pleased to be here to mark Alzheimer's Tea Day. So many families in the country have been affected by this illness and it is really important we do everything we can to bring awareness to this illness and help the Alzheimers Society continue to do the vital work they do."*

***Chair of the Irish Dementia Working Group (IDWG) Ronan Smith said:***

*“Tea Day is about coming together, about having a conversation and raising money for community services. However, I really feel like we have been having that conversation for a long time now. It is now five years since I shared my story of living with dementia; five years since I shared the challenges my family and I face every day; and also five years since I began asking the Government to fund dementia care.*

*“I am a proud volunteer advocate for The Alzheimer Society of Ireland and I am so proud of my fellow volunteers throughout the country who are raising vital funds today. But I am also a citizen with a right to health care and I should not depend on charity to access that right.*

*“I really appreciated the Minister for Health for attending today’s Alzheimer’s Tea Day and I really appreciated his time and his willingness to listen. And most importantly I have faith in the Minister to act. Because that it what we need now – action to fund community supports.”*

**-Ends-**

**For more information, please contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Communications Manager, Cormac Cahill on 086 044 1214 or** [**cormac.cahill@alzheimer.ie**](mailto:cormac.cahill@alzheimer.ie)

**Notes to the Editor:**

**About 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](http://www.alzheimer.ie/)

**About Dementia:**

The number of people with dementia in Ireland is expected to more than double over the next 18 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.
* 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.
* Figures referenced to Cahill, S. & Pierce, M. (2013) *The Prevalence of Dementia in Ireland*