**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Monday, 27th January, 2020**

**Almost 6,000 people contact Alzheimer National Helpline in stark reminder of crisis in people accessing dementia care**

* 78% of users dealing with confirmed diagnosis looking for supports and services
* 52% of users dementia with confirmed diagnosis have no service
* 20% of relatives who contacted the helpline mentioned carer stress
* National Helpline receives internationally recognised quality mark

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland’s (ASI) has revealed that ***5,478*** people contacted their Alzheimer National Helpline in 2019 with ***78%*** of helpline users who are dealing with a confirmed diagnosis of dementia seeking information about services and supports in their community which further demonstrates the pressing need for more supports and services which are currently in a state of crisis.

Over half (52%) of people who contacted with the helpline where a dementia diagnosis was confirmed said they were ***not currently accessing any service*** with 11% indicating they do access a service, but needed more help. The main services discussed were key community-based supports including home care; Dementia Advisers; Day Care; Support Groups; Respite; Social Clubs and Alzheimer Cafés.

In addition to this, 20% of relatives who contacted the helpline explicitly mentioned ***carer stress*** and 16% of families and people with dementia verbalised a need to talk to someone about how they are coping. This is a real-time reflection of the pressure that this diagnosis can bring and the isolation that can emerge which was documented in The ASI’s De-Stress carers’ report that was published with Trinity College in 2017.

The ASI knows only too well that access to community dementia care depends on where you live and no county in Ireland has an acceptable level of dementia support. The ASI’s ***General Election 2020*** campaign ***‘Deliver on Dementia – Time to End the*** ***Crisis’*** aims to ensure that dementia is included in the new Programme for Government so people with dementia and their families can get the support that they need.

The majority of contacts to the Helpline came from people living in **Dublin (36%)** with ***Cork (6%)***, ***Kildare (3%)***, ***Wexford (2%)***, ***Meath (2%)*** and ***Galway (2%)*** are the top 5 counties after the capital. The provincial breakdown is as follows: 51% from ***Leinster***; 13% from ***Munster***; 3% from ***Ulster***; 5% from ***Connacht***; 1% outside of the ***Republic of Ireland***; and 27% unknown.

The helpline, which opened in 2000, is open six days a week Monday to Friday 10am-5pm and Saturday 10am-4pm by calling ***1800 341 341***, emailing helpline@alzheimer.ie or visiting www.alzheimer.ie

The helpline has also developed a digital solution for people to make contact with the key service with its ***Live Chat*** option now live for people who are browsing [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie). In 2019, The ASI had a total of 192 (4% of total contacts to the helpline) queries coming through Live Chat from May-December 2019.

The ASI is also delighted to announce that the helpline has been successful in achieving the ***Helpline Partnership Standard***. This is an internationally recognised quality mark, ensuring all enquirers to The ASI are dealt with by adequately and appropriately trained staff, operating under strict policies and procedures which have been measured and monitored by an external objective body.

***Pat McLoughlin, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland’s CEO said:***

*“The high number of people contacting the helpline clearly shows there is a real lack of supports and services across the country with no county having access to even a minimum standard of care. It’s very worrying to see that 78% of callers to the helpline where a diagnosis is confirmed are from people looking for information about supports and services with 52% of people callers where a diagnosis was confirmed saying they have no service at all. We all know that there is a crisis in dementia care and carers are really feeling the brunt with 20% of relatives who contacted the helpline explicitly mentioning carer stress. This is very worrying. It’s so important that dementia is included in the next Programme for Government to ensure people with dementia and their families get the support they need and when they need it.”*

***Samantha Taylor, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland’s National Information & Advice Services Manager said:***

*“The helpline is a key part of the information service offered by The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, ASI. Set up in 2000, this free and confidential service provides access to information and emotional support for people with dementia, their carers, relatives and friends, for professionals and for people who are concerned about their own or a family member’s cognitive health. Dementia is a life-changing diagnosis with 38% of people reaching out to the helpline within the first year of diagnosis and a further 17% are within two years of diagnosis. This demonstrates that the Helpline is a vital support to people coming to terms with this illness. The demand for our helpline is growing with the addition of our online Live Chat option and attaining the Helpline Partnership’s quality standard award in 2019 reflects our ongoing commitment to delivering the best in dementia information in Ireland and the dedication of our staff and volunteers.”*

**ENDS**

**For more information contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Communications Manager Cormac Cahill on 086 044 1214 or** **cormac.cahill@alzheimer.ie**

***About The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI):***The ASI is the national leader in understanding and providing dementia-specific supports and services. With a national network of over 120 specialist services, 900 staff and 300 volunteers, each year they provide almost 900,000 hours of community-based, dementia-specific care throughout Ireland. For more information see www.alzheimer.ie.

***General Election 2020:***

The ASI’s election campaign is called ‘Deliver on Dementia – Time to End the Crisis’. Dementia must be in the new Programme for Government and we need your help to make this happen.

**The ASI’s asks are:**

● The National Dementia Strategy is fully implemented

● Home care for everybody

● Dementia is in the Chronic Disease Management Programme

More information: https://alzheimer.ie/creating-change/political-campaigns/general-election-2020/

**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*