**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Monday, 3rd February, 2020**

**Small numbers of candidates pledge to support dementia while people are living in crisis**

* Carers reveal heartbreaking reality of lack of supports
* 55,000 people living with dementia in Ireland
* Serious gaps in services throughout Ireland

Journalist and broadcaster Teena Gates has revealed that socialising and working outside the home is now practically impossible for full-time family carers like her due to the dementia care crisis that is a daily reality for the ***55,000*** living with dementia and their struggling families who are fighting to access essential supports and services in ***Ireland***.

Yet despite this, across the country, just 150 candidates have signed the pledge to deliver on dementia.

Teena, who is from Dublin and is a full-time carer for her elderly father, Terry, who was diagnosed with dementia last year, has issued one last rallying call to ***General Election 2020*** candidates to support The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI) who are calling on all candidates to pledge their support to Deliver on Dementia and ensure dementia is in the next ***Programme for Government***.

***Teena Gates said:*** *“I used to think I knew what being a carer was. I used to think I knew what 24/7 care meant. I didn’t have a clue. It means you never go to the toilet on your own again. It means you never close the door when you shower. It means you can’t meet a friend for coffee without a complicated cover system. It means working outside the home is practically impossible. Yet all of these things are possible with support. So many of us just need a little help, to help us love and care for the ones we love and care for.”*

The ASI knows only too well that access to dementia care in the community 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.

**All candidates must pledge to Deliver on Dementia in the next Programme for Government to ensure:**

● The National Dementia Strategy is fully implemented
● Home care for everybody
● Dementia is in the Chronic Disease Management Programme

***Patricia Maguire, from Wexford who helps to care for her Dad who has dementia, said:***

*“My hope for the next Government is to give back to the people like my Dad who contributed so much to our society as my mam has no support from the Government. My Mam is living in Wexford where there is no home care support for her. My Mam has her own health issues as a 70-year-old women may have and her mental health and physical health is being impacted due to the lack of support. My parents both deserve better from this country and should be cared for in meaningful way. We want our dad to receive the care that he deserves.”*

**ENDS**

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

**NOTES TO THE EDITOR**

***General Election 2020 campaign:***

***Voters Can Support***1. When you meet a candidate in the General Election use our Voter Prompt Card on alzheimer.ie to help outline the challenges and struggles you face. We need as many people as possible to highlight the crisis in dementia care.

2. Take 30 seconds to send a letter to your local TD which is asking them to pledge to deliver on dementia in the Programme for Government via alzheimer.ie

***Candidates Can Support***General Election candidates can pledge their support to Deliver on Dementia in the next Programme for Government on social media (Twitter, Facebook or Instagram), simply stating you support the #DementiaPledge2020

***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.

**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*