**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Wednesday, 29th April 2020**

***\* Pictures attached, more available on request
\* Interviews available on request***

**Dáithí Ó Sé and Sinead Kennedy invite nation to show solidarity with people with dementia and family carers to celebrate first ever Virtual Alzheimer’s Tea Day**

RTÉ stars ***Dáithí Ó Sé*** and ***Sinead Kennedy*** are calling on the nation to show solidarity with people with dementia and their family carers and have ***Tea in Every Home*** with their friends and loved ones on the phone or online to mark the first ever ***Virtual Alzheimer’s Tea Day*** which takes place across Ireland on Thursday, 7th May.

Alzheimer’s Tea Day, The ASI’s biggest and most important fundraiser, was due to celebrate its 26th year across every town this year, but the traditional event has now been ***cancelled*** because of Covid-19 and the need to keep people safe and apart – losing around ***€500,000*** of public generosity.

The ASI has listened to ***concerns*** of people with dementia and family carers who have been feeling isolated in their own homes lately and many people have contacted The ASI about Tea Day – and thanks to the wonders of modern technology we are delighted that a Virtual Tea Day can take place.

The ASI wants people to now come together virtually to celebrate, remember and show solidarity with people with dementia, their carers and the ***500,000*** people who are impacted by dementia in Ireland.

Although people can’t gather in groups for Tea Day, people can still ***connect and reach out*** to friends and loved ones across their communities, around Ireland and abroad – on the phone, on screen, Skype, Zoom and any other socially-distanced way people may choose.

This year, it’s ***more important than ever*** before that people put the kettle on, pick up the phone and reach out to a loved one or someone in your community to say hello and share a virtual cup of tea and to show people with dementia and carers who are at home, often confused, isolated and struggling without access to usual daily supports that we haven't forgotten them.

***It’s easier than ever to participate in Tea Day, just do 4 simple things: Host, Share, Give and Dare:***

**1***.* ***Host*** your tea Day at home by connecting on phone, on screen or on-line.

**2.** **Share** your Tea Day with us and on your social media – photos, videos, messages. You will be able to download your own virtual Tea Day Tea Cup to share on your social media by making a donation on www.alzheimer.ie and please use the hashtags #TeaInEveryHome #TeaDay2020
**3. *Give*** €4 by text or a more significant amount online by visiting www.alzheimer.ie\*
**4.** ***Dare*** your family, neighbours and friends to host their own Tea Day at home. Tea Day. On May 7th, home is where your heart is.

Please follow The ASI on **Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/TheAlzheimerSocietyofIreland>

**Twitter** @alzheimerSocIre **Instagram:** @alzheimersocirl

\* Text cost €4. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland will receive a minimum of €3.60. SP: LikeCharity. Helpline: 0766805278

***The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Ambassador, Dáithí Ó Sé said:*** *“I’m delighted to support the Virtual Alzheimer’s Tea Day. Due to the Covid-19 public health crisis, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland has now decided to cancel their biggest and most important annual fundraiser. However, the nation can still come together while staying apart to put the kettle on and have tea in every home across Ireland in celebration of community spirit and togetherness with a virtual Tea Party on Thursday, 7th May. Please have a cup of your favourite brew and please donate a few euro to The Alzheimer Society of Ireland’s Virtual Alzheimer’s Tea Day campaign. For everyone who takes part you’ll be helping to celebrate community togetherness and raise awareness of a condition that is affecting so many of our family, friends and neighbours. There are 55,000 people living with dementia in Ireland today, so that’s 55,000 good reasons to get the kettle on.”*

***TV Presenter, Reporter and ASI Ambassador Sinead Kennedy said:*** *“I’m delighted to see the first ever Virtual Alzheimer’s Tea Day taking place this year to bring people together in our communities at this difficult time. Despite the traditional Alzheimer’s Tea Day being cancelled this year due to Covid-19, people can still get involved in Tea Day this year. You can share your Tea Day on social media; download a virtual Tea Day Tea Cup; donate €4 by text; or challenge your family, neighbours and friends to host their own Tea Day in their own home. It really is that simple. This year, it’s more important than ever before that people put the kettle on, pick up the phone and reach out to a loved one or someone in your community to say hello and share a virtual cup of tea to help the 55,000 living with dementia in Ireland. For more information go to teaday.ie”*

***The Alzheimer Society of Ireland CEO Pat McLoughlin said:****“Today, we should all be preparing for the Alzheimer’s Tea Day, our biggest and most important fundraising event of the year. Alzheimer’s Tea Day has been our biggest fundraising event over the last 26 years and the organisation is so dependent on the funds that it brings in each and every year. However, the Covid-19 health crisis means that Alzheimer’s Tea Day has now been cancelled, but I am delighted that we can still celebrate the community spirit that makes Tea Day such a great national event through modern technology with Virtual Alzheimer’s Tea Day. I think with the public’s generosity of spirit and kindness, we can do this. We can make this the best Tea Day yet – even though we will be apart.”*

Since the Covid-19 public health crisis took hold in Ireland, The ASI has ***continued to support people with dementia and their families*** as our Home Care, Dementia Advisers, National Helpline and Online Family Carer Training are all still running. In addition, our National Helpline has expanded to include a new 1:1 Dementia Nurse and Dementia Adviser call-back service and we are implementing new ways of providing ASI supports remotely to our clients and their families such as regular telephone calls and activity packages for people to use in their own homes.

**-Ends-**

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

**Notes to the Editor:**

***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.

***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 from 55,000 today to 141,200 in 2050.\*
• 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.
• There are 11,000 new cases of dementia in Ireland each year. That’s at least 30 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*

*\*Figure referenced from Alzheimer Europe (2020)* *Dementia in Europe Yearbook 2019 ‘Estimating the prevalence of dementia in Europe’*

*\*\*Figure referenced from Pierse, T., O’Shea, E. and Carney P. (2018) Estimates of the prevalence, incidence and severity of dementia in Ireland*