**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Monday, June 8th 2020**

**Campaigner and full-time carer for her dad (90) refusing to ‘go down black hole’ as Ireland marks hidden heroes during National Carers Week 2020**

***\*Interviews available on request***

Current family carer ***Máire-Anne Doyle*** has opened up about the challenges of being a full-time carer for her father, Brian, who turned 90 this year, during the Covid-19 health crisis as Ireland marks hidden heroes during national ***Carers Week 2020*** from ***June 8th-June 14th***.

A former HR Recruitment Specialist who worked in Toronto before returning to Dublin four years ago and moving back into the family home to care for her father, Brian, who was diagnosed with ***vascular dementia*** six years ago.

Máire-Anne, who is a member of the ***Dementia Carers Campaign Network (DCCN)*** ***said:*** *“It’s like living in Groundhog Day permanently but I’m carrying on as best I can. Dad is a phenomenal man but his life is now so much more restricted due to Covid-19 and he has constant questions. We no longer receive the daily hour of assistance from the HSE due to the worry of Covid-19. We only deal in the now and we don’t go down the black hole of what if.”*

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is fully aware, through research and from new information from our ***Dementia Advisers***, our new online ***Dementia Nurse*** Service and calls to our ***Alzheimer National Helpline*** that the pressure points on family carers of people with dementia are increasing and are reaching a critical point.

The Covid-19 health crisis has been a perfect storm for carers of people with dementia with the closure of our day centres in particular, along with social clubs, Alzheimer cafés, face-to-face carer training. Many carers have ***nowhere to go and no respite from the relentless demands of caring*** and the work to keep their loved ones stimulated.

There was a ***crisis*** in dementia care in Ireland long before Covid-19 – but now it’s unthinkable what family carers are going through with no access to vital key supports and services.

However, throughout this public health emergency, The ASI has continued to support people with dementia and their families as our ***Home Care***, ***Dementia Advisers***, ***Alzheimer National Helpline*** and ***Online Family Carer Training*** are all still running. The ASI has already implemented 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 and the recent expansion of our National Helpline which offers a ***1:1 telephone*** or ***video conference call*** with a Dementia Nurse and have also launched another new service our ***Online Support Group for Family Carers*** which will be a ***dedicated space*** for family carers to find information and resources of interest to them.

***To celebrate Carers Week 2020, The ASI will:***

* *Highlight some of our key carer support services which have been adapted to support families caring for a loved one with dementia;*
* *Highlight the experiences of family carers.*
* *Holding an open online meeting with family carers to mark the week.*

Full details are on [***www.alzheimer.ie***](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

The partner organisations in ***Carers Week 2020*** are The ASI, CRC, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, Care Alliance Ireland, Irish Cancer, Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland, St Michael's House, DFI, MS Ireland and the Irish Hospice Foundation. More information on ***wwww.carersweek.ie***

There is an estimated ***50,000 carers*** of people with dementia in Ireland.

***The Alzheimer Society of Ireland CEO, Pat McLoughlin said:*** *“Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we know many people are taking on more caring responsibilities than ever before due to vital services such as our day centres being temporarily closed. Over the next few days we will highlight some of our key carer support services which have been adapted to support families caring for a loved one with dementia; highlight the experiences of family carers; and hold an open online meeting with family carers to mark the week. Look, we know family carers are facing unprecedented challenges. We hope that together, we can ensure family carers are made visible and no longer remain hidden heroes.”*

**ENDS**

**For more information contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Communications Officer Lisa Gernon** **lisa.gernon@alzheimer.ie** **086 029 5634**

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

***Responding to COVID-19 Public Health Emergency:***

The ASI has developed some tip sheets and a number of factsheets to help support people with dementia and their families in a challenging and rapidly changing situation including information on activities, changes in behavior as well as tip sheets for people with dementia and supporting people with dementia in the community

**Website:** [www.alzheimer.ie/about-us/coronavirus-covid-19-update/](http://www.alzheimer.ie/about-us/coronavirus-covid-19-update/)

***Alzheimer National Helpline:***

For more information on our supports and services during this challenging time, please contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland National Helpline where you can now also book in a 1:1 session with a Dementia Nurse or Dementia Adviser. The Helpline is open six days a week Monday to Friday 10am–5pm and Saturday 10am–4pm on 1800 341 341. Email at helpline@alzheimer.ie or via Live Chat at [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.*