**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Tuesday, 13th October 2020**

**Budget 2021: €13 million dementia investment positive step to address sharp deterioration in health of people affected by dementia during Covid-19**

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI) has welcomed the Government’s decision to invest €13 million in dementia community supports in Budget 2021 as a welcome step in dealing with the sharp deterioration in health of both people dementia and their family carers caused by the ***COVID-19 pandemic***.

The ASI particularly welcomes the €5 million investment for ***community dementia supports***, 250,000 hours of ***dementia appropriate*** ***home care***; and ***four new Regional Memory Clinics*** in Waterford, Wexford, Sligo and Mayo providing assessment and support services for those with dementia.

The ASI’s Pre-Budget Submission 2021, ***Dementia: The Forgotten Crisis*** outlined the detrimental impact of COVID-19 on people affected by dementia and the continued absence of vital services and the growing gap between need and delivery which is now more critical than ever.

**Investment in Dementia – Highlights Budget 2021:**

* *5 million hours of home care announced (minimum 5% ring-fenced for people living with dementia which equates to 250,000 hours)*
* *Expansion of in-home day care service provided by The ASI*
* *Expansion of the Memory Technology Resource Room Network*
* *4 new memory assessment and support services in Sligo, Mayo, Waterford and Wexford*
* *Recruitment of 11 Dementia Advisors in 2021 (30 Dementia Advisers in place by end of 2021)*
* *Education for staff in the acute hospitals about dementia and delirium care*
* *Implementation of the National Clinical Guideline on Appropriate Prescribing of Psychotropic Medication for non-cognitive symptoms in people with dementia*
* *Dementia: Understand Together in Communities funding for the recruitment of a National Coordinator and a Programme Support Officer*
* *Carers Support Grant increased by €150 up to €1850*
* *Increase in the dependent relative tax credit from €70 - €245 for family carers*

This announcement is acknowledgment that there is a welcome understanding at Government level of the ***harsh realities*** faced by people affected by dementia up and down the country. Recent research from The ASI has shown that during the COVID-19 crisis, ***86%*** of family carers were concerned about a decline in their loved one with dementia, while ***61%*** of family carers believe their own mental health has been negatively impacted. People with dementia and their family carers are ***worried***, ***stressed*** and ***fearful*** due to the ***continued closure*** of key face-to-face community services such as day care centres.

***The Alzheimer Society of Ireland CEO Pat McLoughlin said:*** *“Today’s announcements represent a good package to support people with dementia and their family carers across the country. We have waited for some time for these investments and they are so badly needed. This is the first time a Budget has included dementia in this way and that is recognition for such a significant disease and its impact on thousands of families. Today is an important milestone. We know dementia services were in crisis before Covid-19 – but things are even worse now. We know through our research that so many of our people are struggling to cope due to the continued closure of our face-to-face services. They are worried, stressed and fearful. For a long time they have been the forgotten ones – but not today. I just hope today is the real start of a continued cycle of adequately supporting people with dementia and their families in Ireland.”*

Full-time family carer ***Denise Monahan*** (56) from Tallaght in Dublin believes that it is crucial that the Government now provide the critical investment needed to reopen dementia-specific services such as day care. Denise’s father, Seamus Cunningham (82), was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s eight years ago and has attended The ASI’s Rose Cottage day care centre in Dublin since his diagnosis.

***Full-time carer Denise Monahan said:*** *“Usually on Budget Day, people with dementia are totally forgotten about, but today it was great to see people with dementia and their family carers not being taken for granted. Just to hear the word dementia being mentioned gave me a lift. At last, I am grateful to a Government for giving this disease the attention it deserves. It’s so important that people like my father – and the thousands of others around the country – have the support they need and deserve. Dementia is a very tough journey and families need all the support they can get. Today’s announcement will make that journey a little easier. This needs to be built on in the future. Too many people are hurting and struggling to cope with inadequate dementia services for that not to happen. The lockdown has proved very challenging for my dad and for us as a family. I am worried about the impact that Covid-19 is having on him. He was attending Rose Cottage Day Care Centre until Covid meant that it had to close. I’m not sure he’ll go back there now, but I will look at getting him some home care.”*

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

**ENDS**

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**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)

***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)

***Alzheimer Society of Ireland Pre-Budget Submission 2021:***

* ***€10 million – Urgent Infrastructure Support***

To refurbish and rebuild dementia specific day centres to enable them to re-open in the immediate term and to expand services into the future

* ***€6 million – Dementia Home Care Supports***

To provide home care that is dementia appropriate and can meet growing demand

* ***€589k – Additional Dementia Advisers***

To continue to develop a nationwide Dementia Adviser service

* ***€2.31 million –Dementia Key Workers***

To provide a care pathway for each person with dementia

* ***€768k –Dementia Inclusive Community Coordinators***

To support the further development of a dementia inclusive Ireland

**ABOUT DEMENTIA**

* There are almost 64,000 people with dementia in Ireland and for every one person with dementia three others are directly affected;
* During the COVID-19 crisis, 86% of family carers were concerned about a decline in the person with dementia, while 61% of carers believe their own mental health has declined;
* Most people with dementia live at home (63%);
* No county in Ireland provides people with even a minimum standard of dementia community services and supports;
* The number of people with dementia will rise to 113,000 within the next twenty years
* 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;
* 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.*