



IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Thursday, 21st January 2021

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland calls on Government to designate family carers of people with dementia as a priority group for COVID-19 vaccination

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is actively highlighting and lobbying Government about the importance of family carers of people with dementia being included as a **priority group** in the roll out of the **Covid-19 vaccination programme**.

There is a real urgency and importance to the inclusion of all family carers – especially **sole carer givers** – as a priority group in the plans to roll out the Covid-19 vaccine. The ASI is **concerned** by the lack of any mention of family carers as a specific group and the vaccination schedule given their very real vulnerabilities in relation to Covid-19.

Currently, family carers are not only shielding their loved ones from Covid-19, but are living with a **real fear** of what would happen if they themselves get sick and are unable to care is very **distressing**.

Carers of people with dementia have been one of the worst hit groups during Covid-19 pandemic. In The ASI research report last July, **'Caring and Coping with Dementia During Covid-19'** highlighted the crisis aftermath of life in lockdown that has taken an enormous toll on people's lives. This has resulted in extra workloads, constant anxiety and exhaustion with **77%** of family carers agreeing that their caring workload has increased since Covid-19 in the report.

Throughout Covid-19, The ASI has been highlighting that many family carers have **felt forgotten during the pandemic**. They have been left without vital face-to-face services since March 2020 and many families are receiving no support or respite from their 24/7 role. Not having access to vaccinations as a priority group is causing stress. The ASI is calling for a **timeline and an action plan** to be provided to all family carers to ensure that no family carer has to wait any longer than necessary to receive the vaccination.

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland CEO, Pat McLoughlin said: *"We must offer family carers the Covid-19 vaccination as a priority. In so many unspoken and unseen ways they are caring for and ensuring that our most vulnerable are safe and cared for. Being a carer is a 24/7 role. They are concerned and extremely worried about the impact that Covid-19 is having and could have on them and their loved one. The impact of a family carer getting Covid-19 would be very severe and we have seen it can really jeopardise the care of the person with dementia. We understand that some family carers will fall under*

the categories outlined for priority due to their age or own health conditions, but many will not. A timeline and action plan should be published to ensure that all family carers are prioritised.”

ENDS

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR

Covid-19 Vaccination for Family Carers:

The ASI echoes the calls of other organisations like Family Carers Ireland that family carers are included as a priority group for vaccinations. The ASI is also part of an Irish Platform for Patient Organisations, Science & Industry (IPPOSI) seeking vaccination prioritisation. The ASI acknowledged and supports the prioritisation of paid carers on the vaccination list, many of whom are ASI staff, but we also want the larger majority of carers who are providing unpaid care within the home to be treated equally in the roll out of the vaccine.

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

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

ABOUT DEMENTIA

- There are 64,000 people with dementia in Ireland and the number of people with the condition will more than double in the next 25 years to over 150,000 by 2045.*
- 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.**
- 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.
- 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 Pierce, T., O'Shea, E. and Carney P. (2018) Estimates of the prevalence, incidence and severity of dementia in Ireland.*