

DRAFT RELEASE – HOMECARE COALITION

Home Care Coalition seeks €110m funding for Home Supports ahead of Budget 2020

Coalition urges action in report ‘Experiences from the Grassroots’, as waiting list for Home Supports Service increases to 7,348 people

Dublin, 24th September 2019 The Home Care Coalition, a group of 22 charities and not-for-profit organisations, has today released a report highlighting the challenges faced by older people and people with disabilities when accessing essential home care services. The Coalition is seeking an investment of €110 million in Budget 2020 to provide the necessary levels of support for people who are already receiving home support services and to meet the growing demand for new home care packages, with recent reports indicating that the waiting list has increased to 7,346 people.

The report, ‘Experiences from the Grassroots’, highlights experiences of delayed discharges and lengthy waiting lists seen by member organisations, including cases of older people and people with life-limiting illnesses remaining in hospitals for months longer than medically necessary due to lack of home care supports. This is despite reports that priority for home supports is being given to people in acute hospitals to enable them to be discharged, as a shortage of home supports services directly contributes to a lack of available hospital beds.

The Coalition highlights that although there have been numerous reassurances that access to home care has not been frozen, this is not reflective of their experiences on the ground, with one organisation highlighting a case in which the family of an older woman were told not to bother applying home care as they would not get it due to the length of the waiting list, and another being told in number of regions they were not allowed to use the word ‘embargo’.

Members of the Coalition range from NGOs working with older people and people with disabilities and long-term illnesses, to organisations working directly with carers, to groups working in the primary care sector.

“It is unacceptable that no action is being taken as we simply watch the waiting list for home supports continue to rise,” said a spokesperson for the Coalition, ALONE CEO Seán Moynihan. “We have seen in recent weeks that there was a record number of delayed discharges this summer when 769 people remained in hospitals nationwide who did not need to be there, many of whom were waiting for step down support services. Meanwhile we know that in some areas there is simply no funding for new home supports packages. Explanations that the HSE do not want to overrun their budget are simply not good enough when there are thousands of people on waiting lists unable to access the services they need.”

As well as challenges in accessing home supports, the Coalition note that the service itself is under-resourced and that issues remain with the quality of the service provided. Issues faced by the older people and people with disabilities when accessing home care services include insufficient staff training, under-

resourcing of home care staff, insufficient standards and quality systems, inadequate safeguarding and monitoring, and inconsistencies across areas in terms of prioritisation, access and assessment processes.

Moynihan continued, “The under resourcing of the home supports service affects more than the person who needs home care; it impacts their families, home care workers, and the health system at large. The lack of clarity regarding the legal obligation of the State to provide care to older people and people with disabilities, as well as a lack of qualified home care workers, has put pressure on family members to take on the role of carer. Home care workers themselves are overstretched, while family carers find the services available inadequate to meet their needs.”

Moynihan concluded, “It is vital that the budget for the Home Supports Service is increased in line with demand by €110 million this year. We recognise that the Department of Health are working on a new statutory scheme for home care which we are contributing to, and we hope that the new scheme will solve some of the challenges that our clients are experiencing every day with the home supports service. The scheme will represent a vital part of Sláintecare and we support its implementation. However, older people, people with disabilities, and their families, can’t put care off until the new scheme is introduced. We need to provide these services now.”

ENDS

NOTES TO THE EDITOR

The Home Care Coalition is a group of 22 charities, not-for-profit organisations and campaigners, established with the aim of ensuring the implementation of an adequately resourced, person-centred statutory home care scheme with equality of access and availability across the country.

Members of the Coalition:

Age Action, Age and Opportunity, ALONE, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, Care Alliance Ireland, Cheshire Ireland, Disability Federation of Ireland, Family Carers Ireland, Irish Association of Social Workers, Irish Heart Foundation, Irish Hospice Foundation, Irish Motor Neuron Disease Association, Irish Wheelchair Association, Migrants Rights Centre Ireland, MS Ireland, National Women’s Council of Ireland, Neurological Alliance of Ireland, Northside Home Care Services, SAGE Advocacy, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Third Age Ireland

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