

Government urged to invest €5.5 million in dementia services to tackle inequity across Ireland **(<https://www.activelink.ie/node/109218>)**

18% increase in demand for Dementia Adviser services

Waiting lists for The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Services in every county

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (The ASI) is calling on the Government to invest **€5.5 million** in dementia supports and services to address inequity of access across the country.

The organisation is highlighting the vital need for increased care services, social protection, research resources and workforce planning to meet the growing needs of thousands of people across the country.

The recommendations are contained in The ASI's Pre-Budget Submission 2025 ***Equal Dementia Supports, Building on Momentum in 2025***, which was launched today at Buswell's Hotel in Dublin – and calls for additional State investment to address a rising demand for dementia services.

The submission asks Government to build on the momentum of the past four years with an investment of **€5.5m**, alongside tangible policy solutions to address:

- Ongoing geographical inequity in dementia services and supports (including Day Care, Day Care at Home, Weekend Activity Clubs, Dementia Advisers, Clinical Nurse Specialists in Dementia)
- Financial struggles of family carers
- Mental health needs of people living with dementia and those who care and support them
- A sustainable dementia workforce
- Support for Irish dementia research.

The ASI's Head of Advocacy, Research and Public Affairs, Cormac Cahill said there are 29 Dementia Advisers working across Ireland who are consistently in demand.

"In 2023, the service worked with 4,607 new clients, a 12% increase on 2022. In 2024, demand for the first four months of the year for the service is already 6% ahead of 2023 – showing an 18% increase since the start of 2023.

"Providing greater access to the Dementia Adviser Service will support more people living with dementia and their families to navigate services and supports and receive personalised and timely information about dementia, which has been identified as a significant challenge.

"Our services throughout the country such as Day Care and Day Care at home have waiting lists and ongoing capacity challenges. We are ambitious for the lives of people with dementia, and those who care for, and support them. The actions in this submission have the power to be life-enhancing and life-changing.

"We appreciate the support from this Government, particularly Minister Mary Butler and her continued understanding and funding of much-needed dementia services. This support has led to considerable improvement in the level of dementia supports in Ireland. Given the rising need and the immense challenges faced by people impacted by dementia, what we are proposing in Budget 2025 can build on the investment in recent years and help to address these challenges."

This inequity in services was highlighted by **Kathleen Farrell, who lives with Lewy Body Dementia**, and said: *"We should be able to stay in our own homes if that is what we want. Everybody should be entitled to the same support no matter where they live in the country. Time is not our friend; we cannot wait for a service sometime in the future".*

The ASI has highlighted the urgent need for a **Dementia Registry** to quantify the number of people diagnosed with dementia in Ireland and where they live.

Dr Laura O'Philbin, Research and Policy Manager with The Alzheimer Society of Ireland said *"The lack of hard data on the number of people living with dementia in Ireland and where they live makes our estimations just that, estimations on prevalence rather than evidence-based facts. A Dementia Registry is essential for planning equitable and responsive service provision, ensuring that limited resources are used in the most optimal way possible."*

The organisation has also outlined the need for investment in **Dementia Research**. Quality research and innovation lead to better outcomes for people with dementia and their families. Ireland has developed a solid foundation in dementia research. Continued investment is vital to capitalise on expertise and knowledge while facilitating a more cohesive research focus across all disciplines.

Nuala Paley's husband Gerry was diagnosed with young onset Alzheimer's Disease in 2017 at the age of 63, Nuala retired from the Civil Service to become his fulltime carer.

Gerry and Nuala are active members of The Irish Dementia Working Group and the Dementia Carers Campaign Network, helping to raise awareness of issues affecting people and families with dementia in Ireland. They have recently availed of the innovative Day Care at Home service and are now joining the call by The ASI for increased funding to ensure others can access this vital support.

Nuala said the situation faced by people living with dementia and those who support and care for them is serious and urgent. *"I meet other carers at meetings, and I know how desperate some people feel. The Day Care at Home service has made a huge difference to me and Gerry. It gets rid of a lot of stress and worry, even just to know that there's someone around; it's great and it gives us both a bit of independence. I love seeing Gerry heading off for coffee or playing a game of scrabble with Lorna from The Alzheimer Society, it brings him so much joy. That's what we want for other people affected by dementia. Support to help them live their lives and do what they like doing every day".*

Summary of submission details

In Budget 2025, The ASI is calling on the Irish Government to invest €5.5m to include:

- €1m for Dementia Specific Day Care at Home Services by to bring the service to 250 more families
- €600,000 to expand Day Centres outside of major cities
- €300,000 year on year for Weekend and Activity Clubs for people with Young Onset Dementia
- €1.8m in 22 Clinical Nurse Specialist in Dementia Roles in acute settings
- €608,000 in eight new Dementia Adviser Roles and three new Regional Leads
- €1m in Dementia Research Network Ireland
- €59,000 to support people affected by dementia to participate in quality dementia research.
- €62,000 to develop a framework for a dementia-specific counselling service.

The organisation is also recommending:

- Increase the Carers Allowance to €325
- Make the Carers Allowance a Qualifying Payment for the Fuel Allowance
- Rollout a National Dementia Registry to ensure accurate and responsive service planning
- Ensure Pay Parity for Section 39 organisations who provide vital dementia services and standardise rates of pay for critical Home Care Workers

The ASI's Submission *Equal Dementia Supports, Building on Momentum in 2025* can be **downloaded at this link**. (<https://alzheimer.ie/creating-change/political-campaigns/equal-dementia-supports-building-on-momentum-in-2025/>) The campaign can be supported online at #EqualDementiaSupports #Budget2025.

Further information

Ronan Cavanagh, Cavanagh Communications: (086) 317 9731 (tel:0863179731) / ronan@cavanaghcommunications.ie (<mailto:ronan@cavanaghcommunications.ie>)

Region

Nationwide

Date Entered/Updated

27th Jun, 2024

Expiry Date

18th Jul, 2024

Source URL: <https://www.activelink.ie/community-exchange/news/109218-government-urged-to-invest-eu55-million-in-dementia-services-to-tackle-inequity-across-ireland>