



Policy Options to Support Ageing Well at Home

Budget 2027



The services and infrastructure needed in a country depends in large part on the make-up of its population. The profile of Ireland's population is changing, and this requires a bespoke policy response from Government. We must plan ahead for changes to our demography to ensure that housing, healthcare, social supports and transport meet the needs of our ageing population. ALONE and *Social Justice Ireland* believe that everyone should be supported to age well in their community, and that this should be Government's over-arching policy goal for older people. By 2030, over one million people in Ireland will be aged 65+. *Future Forty: A Fiscal and Economic Outlook to 2065*¹, published by the Department of Finance, details how the effects of demographic trends are already in motion. Planning and designing the services and infrastructure to achieve this goal must begin now, as a significant increase in investment will be required to meet the challenges associated with an ageing population.

ALONE is a national organisation that enables older people to age at home. ALONE's work is for all older people and aims to improve physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. *Social Justice Ireland* is an independent think tank and social justice advocacy organisation. Both organisations support a vision of Ireland where older people can age happily and securely at home and are strongly connected to their local communities.

Budget recommendations outlined in this paper provide a pathway towards ensuring a greater quality of life for older people in Ireland, as well as better use of state resources. By creating the right conditions, we can enable people to remain connected to their communities and to age in place in comfort and dignity. These recommendations align with aims of the 2013 *National Positive Ageing Strategy*: to promote older people's health and wellbeing so that older people can continue to contribute to social, economic, cultural, and family life in their own communities.

Ageing is different for everyone, and experiences of ageing can vary based on our socioeconomic background, life experiences and environment. We believe that equity of access should be a guiding principle in this vision, ensuring that everyone, regardless of income or location, has the same opportunities to age well at home. More comprehensive analysis underlying our Budget recommendations is available in the 2024, 2025, and 2026 editions of our policy briefing, *Policies for Ageing Well at Home in Ireland*.²

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

The most recent Population and Labour Force Projections from the Central Statistics Office see Ireland's population reaching between 5.7 and 7 million by 2057 depending on the

¹ Department of Finance. (2025). https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/4687e5e7/Future_Forty_-_Full_Online_Version_311025_V2.pdf

² ALONE & Social Justice Ireland, (2024) [Policies for Ageing Well at Home in Ireland](#); (2025) [Policies for Ageing Well at Home in Ireland: Health and Wellbeing](#); and (2026) [Policies for Ageing Well at Home in Ireland: Access to Supports](#).

scenario chosen.³ The proportion of the population aged over 65 years is also set to increase significantly across each scenario.

Policymakers need to plan for the growing needs of an ageing population. According to the CSO, the number of people aged 65+ grew by 21.8 per cent between Census 2016 and 2022, with the largest increases among those aged 70+ (27 per cent) and 85+ (25 per cent). The CSO projects that the number of people aged 65 and over will grow to 1,330,149 people by 2040, making up 22 per cent of the population (see **Table 1**). Additionally, nearly 400,000 people will be aged 80+ by 2040, twice the current number.

Table 1: Projected population by age group (including as a percentage of total population).

Age	2022		2025		2030		2035		2040	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All Ages	5,183,966		5,423,289		5,674,843		5,875,333		6,048,300	
65+	781,299	15.07	859,195	15.84	1,004,866	17.71	1,157,389	19.70	1,330,149	21.99
65-69	240,482	4.64	255,735	4.72	295,238	5.20	321,992	5.48	364,453	6.03
70-74	204,684	3.95	218,863	4.04	242,715	4.28	281,354	4.79	308,187	5.10
75-79	155,017	2.99	175,755	3.24	198,194	3.49	221,896	3.78	259,289	4.29
80-84	96,758	1.87	112,734	2.08	145,761	2.57	167,433	2.85	190,490	3.15
85+	84,358	1.63	96,108	1.77	122,958	2.17	164,714	2.80	207,730	3.43

Source: Based on CSO Population and Labour Force Projections 2023-2057 (M2)

AGEING IN IRELAND TODAY

Ageing, Health and Supports at Home

Overall, ageing populations represent increased longevity, a success story that is to be welcomed. However, we develop additional health and care needs as we age, many of which can be addressed in the community. Significant increases, particularly in numbers of people who are amongst the oldest old, result in increased numbers living with long-term illness or disability as well as other health challenges. For example, there is a marked increase in prevalence of disability from age 75 onwards,⁴ and ‘good’ health also declines with age, with people aged 75+ reporting the lowest rate of general ‘good’ health⁵. While Ireland’s population is ageing, the expected number of healthy life years at 65 has decreased from 13.6 years in 2019 to 11.7 years in 2023.⁶ Furthermore, TILDA research shows that many older people remain undiagnosed or inadequately managed for a range of conditions despite evidence that prevention and early intervention can improve health outcomes, quality of life,

³ CSO. (2024a). [Population and Labour Force Projections 2023-2057](#)

⁴ CSO (2023a) [Census of population 2022 profile 4 – disability, health and carers](#).

⁵ Department of Health (2025) Healthy Ireland survey 2025: summary report.

⁶ CSO. (2024) [Older Persons Information Hub](#).

and reduce healthcare costs⁷. Physical health issues, as well as loneliness, were the most frequently reported concerns in needs assessments of older adults supported by ALONE in 2025⁸.

Falls are the most frequent cause of hospital admission among older people in Ireland and are a leading cause of injury, disability, and loss of independence⁹. Falls can be associated with intrinsic illness/impairment but also with environmental factors such as hazards in the home. Untreated sensory impairments can lead to greater risks of accidents and isolation, emphasising the need for expanded access to aids such as hearing aids and vision support, and assistive technologies.

Another health-related issue that challenges independent living among older people is inadequate **nutrition**, with weight loss and malnutrition increasing risks of potentially avoidable complications and resulting in more GP and outpatient visits and increased likelihood of admittance to hospital¹⁰. According to the Irish Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (IrSPEN), population ageing is associated with a very significant increase in numbers of patients with, or at significant risk of, malnutrition¹¹. Consistent with this, needs assessments carried out by ALONE among older people in 2025 found that nutrition related concerns have increased since 2023¹².

Associated with increases in the older population, significant increases in demand for **home support** is projected, as well as in **short stay** and **long stay care** by 2040¹³. Evidence suggests that highly dependent people can live safely and more happily in domestic settings, provided that appropriate supports are in place¹⁴. Although home support is an efficient and cost-effective alternative to overused hospital facilities, managing the increase in disability and chronic conditions at home requires significant supports across the community. It is against this backdrop of increasing demand for care, that waiting lists for Home Support pose a great challenge, now often associated with lack of availability of care staff. As of January 2026, people assessed and waiting for the provision of home care numbered 5,310 (HSE, 2026)¹⁵. An additional issue has been the failure to deliver the long-awaited **statutory home support entitlement**.

⁷ Briggs, R. and Kenny, R.A. (2025) 'The unmet need: bridging the gaps of unmet healthcare needs in later life', in TILDA Wave 6 report: shaping the future.

⁸ ALONE. (2026). [ALONE ECC Report 2025](#).

⁹ Briggs, R. and Kenny, R.A. (2025) 'The unmet need: bridging the gaps of unmet healthcare needs in later life', in TILDA Wave 6 report: shaping the future.

¹⁰ Irish Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (IrSPEN) (n.d.) [Understanding malnutrition](#); Rice, N. (2025) *The prevalence and costs of malnutrition in an aging Ireland*. [Presentation] IrSPEN Conference 2025, Dublin, 15 April.

¹¹ IrSPEN. (2025). [Dramatic increase in malnutrition in Ireland due to aging population](#).

¹² ALONE. (2026). [ALONE ECC Report 2025](#).

¹³ Walsh, B. and Kakoulidou, T. (2025) *Projections of national demand and bed capacity requirements for older people's care in Ireland, 2022–2040: based on the Hippocrates model*. ESRI

¹⁴ Department of Health (2020) COVID-19 nursing homes expert panel: final report.

¹⁵ HSE (2026) [National Performance Report](#), January 2026

Research demonstrates that **loneliness and social isolation** increases the risk for a host of physical health issues, such as increased blood pressure, mortality, cancer, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, weakened immune function, and frailty. Improved research, awareness, and interventions are required, in line with recommendations from the World Health Organisation. **Day care centres** also play an important role in offering programmes and services for older people with a variety of needs, including socialisation and activities as well as health services and rehabilitation. However, a 2020 study on geographic accessibility of day care services in Ireland found that there are large parts of the country where they are difficult to access.¹⁶ Of note, **social integration** plays a vital role in promoting the health of older adults who live at home.

Meanwhile, key issues for carers include continued under-resourcing of appropriate **respite care**, failure to publish a refreshed *National Carers' Strategy*, and the impact of the continuing chronic shortage of Home Support Workers on **family carers** who are being forced to care alone and unsupported.

All of this underscores the need for a major focus on how all older people can maintain a range of connections and continue to access vital home support and care, healthcare and other services that are essential to supporting us to live at home as we age.

Accessibility of Supports

At present, there is significant variance in the availability and accessibility of services across the country. For example, almost four times as many people are on waiting lists for home support in the HSE West and Northwest region than in the Dublin Midlands region¹⁷. Of the six dedicated falls clinics in Ireland, four are located in Dublin¹⁸. The Mental Health Commission has highlighted that Ireland does not provide a “nationwide, comprehensive” mental health service for older people¹⁹. Significant differences exist in disability rates between the most deprived and the most affluent areas and they grow significantly over the life course²⁰. Digitalisation, social networks, transport, financial insecurity, and healthcare access have all been found to be particularly impactful on older people's health²¹.

¹⁶ Pierse, T; Keogh, F; O'Shea, E; Cullinan, J (2020) Geographic availability and accessibility of day care services for people with dementia in Ireland. BMC Health Services Research

¹⁷ https://about.hse.ie/api/v2/download-file/file_based_publications/PQ_5691-26_-_Martin_Daly.pdf/

¹⁸ Briggs, R., Ward, M., Scarlett S., van der Velde, N., Hernandez, B., Romero-Ortuno, R., Tysinger, B., May, P., Ahern, E., Kenny, R (2026). 'Determining the burden of falls amongst community-dwelling older people in Ireland to inform falls care delivery: secondary data analysis from the Irish longitudinal study on ageing – the defined study'. BMJ Open, 16 (1).

¹⁹ Finnerty, S (2020). 'Mental Health Services for Older People'. Mental Health Commission.

²⁰ Pobal (2024) Disability and Deprivation Investigating the Relationship between Health Inequalities and Geographic Disadvantage using the Pobal HP Deprivation Index.

²¹ Tind, A.M., Hoeck, B., Andersen, H.E. and Delmar, C., (2026). 'Navigating health inequities in aging: The impact of social determinants on health and homecare nursing for older people'. *Geriatric Nursing*, 67, article 103714.

Older people are more likely to live alone than other age groups, with over one-quarter of people aged 65 or over doing so, rising to 44 per cent for people aged 85+²², which is when disability and chronic conditions are also most prevalent. Relatedly, **appropriate transport options** play an important role in combating social isolation and in facilitating access to vital healthcare services. Research from the Citizens Information Board²³ concerning people aged 66+, found that poor public transport in rural Ireland is a barrier to attending hospital and GP appointments, and that it can also result in great expense. As that report concludes, access to primary care services is central to enable older adults to remain living in their communities, and we need better integration between transport and healthcare services.

Linked to the foregoing is the fact that, as healthcare provision embraces technology and digitisation, considerable challenges are emerging to ensure that older people can access services and, at the same time, that the potential of new technologies is harnessed to augment services in appropriate ways. Digital transformation is not experienced equally across all age groups - older people are less likely to use the internet and can find themselves digitally excluded²⁴ but they are also required to go online to access essential services. In addition, older people are particularly vulnerable to unnecessary frictions in engaging with services (such as outdated/confusing websites, unhelpful staff, etc), something that increases inequalities²⁵. In Ireland, loss of in-person health services and reliance on digital systems have been found to negatively impact older people's independence and confidence to manage alone²⁶. Thus, the fact of the digital divide makes it critical that, as well as **supports with digital access**, services **retain non-digital channels** – telephone, face-to-face service desks, or postal options. In the absence of such access, and without a range of other appropriate supports and services, including housing options, many people lack straightforward alternatives to nursing home care.

Housing and Ageing

It is increasingly recognised that a more appropriate **continuum of housing options** for older people is needed, and that living in adapted or specialist housing may reduce reliance on health and social care services and contribute to a greater sense of wellbeing²⁷. But in the absence of appropriate housing options and supports to continue to age at home, many

²² Central Statistics Office (CSO) (2023b) [Census of population 2022 profile 3](#) - households, families and childcare.

²³ Citizens Information Board (CIB) (2025) Ageing at home: supporting older people to remain in their communities. Dublin: CIB Insights Social Policy Series.

²⁴ CSO (2024b) [Internet coverage and usage in Ireland](#) 2024; Flynn, S. (2024) 'Keeping up with the times in Ireland: older adults bridging the age-based digital divide together?', *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 57(1), pp. 156–174. Doi: 10.1080/02660830.2023.2298388.

²⁵ Samahita, M. and Lades, L. K. (2026) [Reducing Friction, Promoting Fairness: Behavioural Perspectives on Sludge in Irish Public Services](#). Dublin: PublicPolicy.ie.

²⁶ Citizens Information Board (CIB) (2025) Ageing at home: supporting older people to remain in their communities. Dublin: CIB Insights Social Policy Series.

²⁷ Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Department of Health (2019) Housing options for our ageing population: joint policy statement, p.13

people lack alternatives to nursing home care. Although nursing homes play a vital role in the provision of care for older people, our overreliance on them has been highlighted in numerous reports, including those of previous Joint Oireachtas Committees²⁸ and successive Government policies.²⁹

A problem with nursing home reliance, and one that will assume greater importance over time, is the financial barrier involved for those living in **rented accommodation** (who cannot avail of the NHSS/Fair Deal). Numbers of households aged 65+ renting in the private sector has increased by 83 per cent since Census 2016. Consequences include rising costs and lack of agency in one's rented home, creating obstacles to ageing well at home, such as challenges in modifying living spaces and growing financial pressures. In 2021, the CSO reported that nearly half of renters over 65 were spending more than 35 per cent of their disposable income on rent.³⁰

Table 2: Housing tenure by persons aged 45-69 per Census 2022

	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	45-69
Owner occupied with loan or mortgage	101,206	82,336	55,995	30,998	13,591	5,919	284,126
Owner occupied without loan or mortgage	31,670	51,831	74,928	91,980	100,245	96,007	350,654
Rented from private landlord	32,146	23,154	16,108	11,123	6,948	4,426	89,479
Rented from a local authority	18,548	17,357	15,573	13,852	11,698	9,201	77,028
Rented from a voluntary body	3,496	3,135	2,475	2,163	1,852	1,495	13,121
Occupied free of rent	2,328	2,247	2,105	2,043	1,976	1,908	10,699
Not stated	7,419	7,088	6,017	5,604	4,853	4,288	30,981
All types of occupancy	196,813	187,148	173,201	157,763	141,163	123,244	856,088
Non-Homeowner occupancies	56,518	45,893	36,261	29,181	22,474	17,030	190,327
Non-Homeowner occupancies as % of Total	29%	25%	21%	18%	16%	14%	22%

Source: CSO, Census of Population 2022 Profile 2 - Housing in Ireland

The scale of this emerging issue can be illustrated by the pattern of housing tenure of those currently aged 45 to 69, as they will form the 63 to 87 age cohort by 2040. Census 2022 data (**Table 2**) show growing rental and insecure tenure among younger groups who will make up the older population by 2040. Those aged 45-69 are less likely to be homeowners than older cohorts, and significantly higher numbers live in private rental accommodation. Yet Ireland's pension model still assumes retirees own their homes and no longer pay mortgages or rent. If this no longer applies, pension adequacy will be seriously undermined.

Furthermore, **housing quality** affects older people to a greater extent than other age groups due to the prevalence of long-term disabilities and conditions among them. Older people are more likely to live in older houses and almost half of people aged 65+ rely on oil for home

²⁸ Joint Committee on Housing Planning & Local Government (2018). 'Housing Options for Older People'

²⁹ Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Department of Health (2019) Housing options for our ageing population: joint policy statement

³⁰ CSO, [The Rental Sector in Ireland 2021](#) (2021)

heating³¹. Increases in costs of oil and other energy sources in 2026 associated with the Iran war will have an outsized impact on older people, including those dependent on oil for heating. Supports to enable **retrofitting** and **reduce energy poverty** are therefore vital.

Accessibility is another key issue, with much of Ireland's current housing being inaccessible for many older people and people with disabilities³². Research suggests that home modifications can increase likelihood of ageing in place³³, but these can be costly for individuals without **Housing Adaptation Grants** from Local Authorities. However, these grants continue to be difficult to access, with several Local Authorities closing applications throughout the year. Overall, housing maintenance and heating as well as the need for housing with support and housing adaptations are highly relevant to whether and how people can age at home in Ireland.

OPTIONS FOR BUDGET 2027

This policy briefing, and the prior editions in this series, demonstrates that there is significant overlap between housing, social care and health care needs of older people with each impacting on the effectiveness of the others. Outcomes for older people, their wellbeing and capacity to live with dignity at home, are also dependent on accessing, not only housing, health and social care but a host of other services including public transport and increasingly digitised services. The paper also points to the need for better integration between disparate policy-makers and service-providers such as those involved transport and healthcare services. To address the range interlinked needs, not for today but also looking toward a 2040 horizon, we make the following recommendations for Budget 2027.

Access to Supports

Invest €785,000 to Improve Access to Digital Health Services

Overall, use of digital technologies provides opportunities for improved care, but brings challenges. It is essential to ensure that a digital divide is not reinforced. It is essential that we move towards digitisation of healthcare in a way that is inclusive of older people, especially of those who are least likely to be able to navigate the new systems.

Therefore, we recommend the roll out and evaluation of a pilot digital enablement training project to support older people to access virtual health appointments through the Attend

³¹ CSO (2025e) [Ireland's UN SDGs – goal 7 affordable and clean energy 2024](#).

³² Grey, T., Xidous, D., O'Donoghue, J., Nicol, S., Kennelly, S., Coveney, E. and O'Neill, D. (2024) Housing conditions and integrated care for older people: Tallaght University Hospital and partners, identifying common housing conditions affecting older people in South Dublin. Dublin: Tallaght University Hospital.

³³ Cha, S.M. (2025) 'A systematic review of home modifications for aging in place in older adults', *Healthcare*, 13(7), p. 752. Doi: 10.3390/healthcare13070752; Kempton, J. and Warby, A. (2011) *Measuring the social return on investment of stage 3 adaptations and very sheltered housing in Scotland*.

Anywhere system. This is to be achieved through the development of digital training modules, the training of Digital Champion Volunteers and include digital needs screening embedded across services.

In 2027, this will require investment of €785,000 in first year costs to reach 4,800 older people across the country.

Improve Older People's Access to Health and Medical Appointments at a cost of €115,000

When older people are unable to access the care they need, they face a heightened risk of adverse health outcomes, including avoidable hospitalisations and ultimately loss of quality of life. Transport is a crucial issue in supporting older people to live at home, and poor public transport limits their ability to attend hospital and GP appointments, especially in rural areas.

Therefore, we recommend that Budget 2027 invest €115,000 in a pilot transport solution to enhance access to health and medical appointments for older people be delivered in one CHN. This pilot should be delivered by a community and voluntary organisation to provide transport to an estimated 120 older people in financial difficulty/unable to access public transport to access to estimated 1,200 health appointments in 2027. Additionally, we recommend that a quantitative study is undertaken to better understand the main causes of missed appointments across the healthcare system to further inform policy action.

Invest €175,000 to Enhance Access to Nutritional Information and Supports for Older People

There is concerning evidence of poor nutritional intake and malnutrition among older adults living in their own homes, which is linked to greater ill-health and greater - but avoidable - use of health services. There also appears to be a failure to identify and treat patients experiencing malnutrition in primary care settings. Action is needed to address these issues, including earlier identification and interventions, and a more widespread roll out of related services.

Therefore, we recommend that Government invest €175,000 in 2027 to enhance access to nutritional information and supports for older people by rolling out and evaluating a nutrition needs assessment pilot to support earlier intervention and improved access to nutritional supports in community and voluntary settings. Supported by volunteers, 20,000 nutritional needs assessments and follow-up interventions can be carried out in 2027.

Energy Poverty – Invest €22m to Improve Access to Information and Practical Supports

Action to address energy poverty is needed to support older people's wellbeing and to support them to continue living in their own homes. This is because older people are less likely to live in an energy efficient home, have a higher risk of experiencing fuel poverty

than other groups, and the fact that energy poverty can increase ill-health and use of health services.

Therefore, we recommend that in Budget 2027 the eligibility criteria for the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme (BEWH) Fully Funded Energy Upgrade be expanded to include all people in receipt of the non-contributory state pension, with the relevant BER eligibility, with an initial additional investment of €21,400,000.

We additionally recommend that Government improve access to information and practical supports for older people experiencing energy poverty, particularly those using oil and solid fuels. To do so Government should invest €500,000 on a public information campaign targeted at older people.

Health and Social Care

To improve access to care, progress a shift to a model that prioritises primary and social care, and to address the inequalities in our system, *Social Justice Ireland* and ALONE make the following recommendations for Budget 2027.

Invest €25.4m in GP Primary Care Services

Increasing the number of GP practice teams across the state will strengthen Primary Care services, ensuring timely access to care and reducing over-reliance on hospital care services. Of a total of 3,806 older people assessed by ALONE in 2025 who reported issues with personal care, 13 per cent had an issue with GP and primary care engagement or similar. There is presently a shortfall of approximately 2,000 GPs required by 2040 according to analysis from the Irish College of General Practitioners. To increase GP practice team care and begin to close this gap, Government should invest an additional €25.4m annually from 2027.

Invest €70m to expand community-based rehabilitation care beds

To reduce pressure on acute hospital services and support more cost-effective healthcare delivery, the Government should invest €70m in expanding rehabilitation and respite care within Community Nursing Facilities. This investment aligns with national healthcare priorities and will help shift care into the community. With population growth projected to drive increased demand, a minimum of 3,000 post-acute rehabilitation beds will be required by 2030. An initial €70m investment in 2027 to deliver 212 beds is a critical first step toward meeting that need by the end of 2030.

Invest €32m to expand acute mental healthcare capacity for older adults

The 2025 Programme for Government commits to fund mental health supports across all Integrated Care Programme for Older People (ICPOP) teams. While investment in primary

and community-based mental health supports will reduce demand for acute services, current need exceeds capacity, requiring parallel investment in acute mental health beds. The 2024 specialist group report on acute mental health bed capacity found there were 1,134 public acute beds in Ireland, 832 fewer than required based on the 50 per 100,000 recommended by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Future of Mental Health³⁴.

By 2030, 454 acute mental health beds for older adults will be required, aligning with the recommendation of *A Vision for Change*, which outlines a need for at least 8 beds for older adults for every 50 acute mental health beds. It seems that only 63 acute mental health beds have been allocated for people aged over 65, which means that the provision of dedicated acute mental health beds for older people is only 50% of that recommended by *A Vision for Change*.³⁵ Therefore, Government will have to make a minimum annual investment of €32m each year for the next 4 years to reach the minimum adequate level, with international best practice indicating a potentially higher requirement. We therefore recommend a minimum investment of €32,000,000 in 2027.

Allocate €3.3m to Falls Prevention through Community Exercise Programmes

According to analysis in a 2026 TILDA report, a third of people aged 65+ fall each year³⁶. Exercise programmes reduce the rate of falls and the number of falls among older people living in the community. These primarily involve balance and functional exercises plus resistance exercises. Indeed, the AFFINITY falls and bone health programme funded the training of 120 HSE physiotherapists and exercise professionals to deliver the Falls Management Exercise Programme (FaME). Research on three early adopter sites of FaME (Dublin, Kerry and Leitrim) is due to be completed with a toolkit to inform the expansion in Ireland. Building on this pilot, we recommend that Government provide funding of €3.3m to provide training to physiotherapists and exercise professionals and to begin the roll-out of FaME to older people in 2027.

Invest €10m in the Meals on Wheels Network

In support of the 2025 Programme for Government commitment to increase funding for the national Meals on Wheels network, ALONE and *Social Justice Ireland* recommend that €10m be invested in 2027 to expand the Meals on Wheels network; to ensure that Meals on Wheels providers are adequately resourced to deliver high-quality nutritional meals; to develop the organisation through collaboration between all Meals on Wheels groups; and

³⁴ National Implementation Monitoring Committee Specialist Group on Acute Bed Capacity. (2024). *Acute Bed Capacity – Report of the Specialist Group: Sharing the Vision - A Mental Health Policy for Everyone*. Dublin: HSE.

³⁵ Expert Group on Mental Health Policy, (2006) *A Vision for Change*. Dublin: Stationary Office.

³⁶ Briggs R, Ward M, Scarlett S, van der Velde N, Hernandez B, Romero-Ortuno R, Tysinger B, May P, Ahern E, Kenny RA. Determining the burden of falls amongst community-dwelling older people in Ireland to inform falls care delivery: secondary data analysis from the Irish longitudinal study on ageing - the defined study. *BMJ Open*. 2026 Jan 30;16(1):e107647. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2025-107647. PMID: 41617230; PMCID: PMC12863362.

to develop robust national standards and protocols to support all local Meals on Wheels services. We additionally recommend that Government develop and implement a multi-annual sustainable streamlined funding model for Meals on Wheels services so that these vital services can be consistently delivered to older adults in need across the country.

Invest €500,000 in a Healthy Ireland Public Awareness Campaign on Nutrition for Older Adults

We recommend Government develop a Healthy Ireland public awareness campaign on nutritional information, building on the recent Healthy Eating Resources, aimed at older adults to combat malnutrition among this group. To deliver this we recommend an investment of €500,000.

Invest €1.35m in the Loneliness Taskforce's National Strategy on Loneliness

Given the links between loneliness and poor physical and mental health outcomes, Government invest €1,353,000 in the recommendations of the Loneliness Taskforce.

According to the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, Ireland has the highest rate of loneliness in the EU: up to 1 in 5 people in Ireland experience loneliness. Social inequalities increase risk of loneliness and its harms, and high rates are linked to poorer economic performance, reduced political participation, and erosion of social trust. Despite this, Ireland has no dedicated national policy on loneliness.

We therefore recommend that Budget 2027 fund the proposed a National Strategy on Loneliness, developed by the Loneliness Taskforce. This five-year plan, which has been developed from public submissions and expert consultation, consists of three pillars in Phase 1:

- Pillar 1 – Awareness and Advocacy: formal recognition of the Taskforce and provision of secretariat support.
- Pillar 2 – Programmes Addressing Loneliness: investment is needed in counselling and talk therapies in primary care for individuals experiencing loneliness, delivered by qualified and accredited professionals.
- Pillar 3 – Evidence: More research is needed on the causes, effects, and solutions for loneliness, especially how these vary across different groups in Ireland. The Loneliness Taskforce Research Network has collectively determined research priorities for loneliness research in Ireland.

To deliver this, we therefore recommend funding of €1.35m in Budget 2027

Allocate €5m to Fund Assistive Technology

To fulfil the 2025 Programme for Government commitment to provide a dedicated funding stream for assistive and digital technology, to maximise independence and harness

efficiencies, the HSE Community Funded Aids and Appliances scheme should be expanded to cover assistive digital technologies. To implement this expansion, funding to the schemes providing aids and appliances should be increased accordingly and continue to be increased on an annual basis in line with demographic changes. To do so, we recommend that the Community Funded Schemes budget be increased by €5,000,000 to pilot the delivery of digital assistive technology to some 12,500 people.

Increase Funding for Home Support Services by €75.4m

In line with the 2025 Programme for Government commitment, Government should increase funding for home support services to deliver additional hours of care in line with the growing health and social care needs of older adults. This requires a total funding allocation of almost €1bn to enable older people to live independently at home with the necessary support. To reach this allocation, we therefore recommend an additional investment of €75.4m in 2027.

Provide €3m to Establish Statutory Home Support Scheme

The 2025 Programme for Government commits to design a Statutory Homecare Scheme to allow people to stay in their own home for as long as possible. Building on work done to date, we recommend that €3m should be allocated to complete the development of a full statutory home support scheme, including system design, funding model, and regulation, and to include the development of capacity-building supports for the community and voluntary sector to meet revised standards in the delivery of the scheme. This will ensure that home care services are accessible and aligned with the evolving needs of the ageing population, guaranteeing consistent care for older individuals across the country.

Invest €37m to expand carers' respite services

Respite services and training opportunities for carers should be expanded, focusing on critical areas like dementia care and chronic condition management. This will help alleviate the financial and emotional strain on carers, ensuring they can continue to provide essential care to older adults while maintaining their own wellbeing. To do so, additional investment of €37m should be delivered in Budget 2027.

Invest €23.1m to increase the Carers' Support Grant

We recommend that Government increase support for unpaid carers in Ireland by raising the Carers' Support Grant from €2,000 to €2,150 annually, at a cost of €23.1m.

Introduce a Carers' Basic Income and Basic Services Pilot at a cost of €10m

The 2025 Programme for Government commits both to increase support for carers – providing training, establishing clearer pathways to services, and improving access to

respite – and to fully fund the Carer’s Guarantee. As a step towards realising the Carer’s Guarantee, we recommend that Government pilot a universal basic services and universal basic income scheme for carers at a cost of €10m in 2027 to establish the pilot.

Housing

The 2019 *Housing Options for Our Ageing Population* joint policy statement from the Department of Housing and Department of Health underscored the importance of aligning appropriate housing solutions with the varying care and social support needs of older individuals. This policy statement outlines critical principles, including ageing in place, supporting urban renewal, sustainable lifetime housing based on Universal Design, recognising the transformative potential of assistive technologies and the importance of social interventions and support services. ALONE’s 2019 *Housing Choices for Older People in Ireland - Time for Action* outlined a mix of Dedicated Older Person’s Housing options built specifically to meet needs of people as they age. It includes multiple options with varying levels of support:

- The first level of Dedicated Older Person’s Housing is **Housing with Supports**, which includes access to 24/7 on-site support and care. This may be an appropriate alternative to nursing homes for some people, offering a better quality of life. This option requires substantial investment and promotion from the government.
- The second level of Dedicated Older Person’s Housing is **Supportive Housing**, which facilitates right-sizing and semi-independent living. This option requires targeted development of clusters of supportive housing across all tenures, with strong collaboration between housing and health authorities.
- The third level of Dedicated Older Person’s Housing is **retirement villages and co-housing communities**, which offer older people community, mutual support, and enables right-sizing. Retirement villages and co-housing must be planned for at a local level, and co-housing communities must be supported to grow by the central government.

The Budget 2027 recommendations to support housing for older people outlined below provide a pathway towards ensuring a greater quality of life for older people in Ireland.

Invest €292m to build 980 social housing units to support right-sizing for older renters

Considering demographic change, we recommend Government invest an additional €291.7m, funded from surplus windfall revenues, to build 980 social housing units in 2027

according to Universal Design principles.³⁷ This would facilitate people aged 65+ who live in private rented, local authority and voluntary body rented accommodation to move to homes more appropriate to their needs as they age (“right-sizing”).

This is a step towards a goal of providing 27,337 right-sized social housing units by the end of 2040, at a projected cost of €8.14bn over the 14-year period.

Community Supports

Below we outline two key recommendations to support older people through the community and voluntary sector while also safeguarding older persons in all aspects of policy and service delivery.

Increase Community and Voluntary Sector funding by €60m

The Community and Voluntary sector provide a range of key supports for older people, from befriending and social inclusion supports, to home support, and assistive technologies. Government should increase funding in this area by €60m in Budget 2027.

Establish Commissioner for Ageing and Older People at a cost of €1.2m

A Commissioner for Ageing and Older People would provide an independent voice with the ability and capacity to engage with all Government departments. They would drive the implementation of strategies and actions relating to the needs and rights of older people, taking a role independent of party politics. In Budget 2027, we therefore recommend Government provide for the creation of a Commissioner for Ageing and Older People with funding of €1.2m in the initial year, followed by €3.9m per annum in subsequent years.

³⁷ These costings are based on the [Total Development Cost Study 2024](#) by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. However, we have excluded several cost components that would not apply in a state-led, non-market housing development. These include:

- Land costs (assuming development occurs on publicly owned land)
- Sales, marketing, and legal fees (as no sale is involved)
- Finance costs (state-funded, no borrowing required)
- Developer risk / margin (not applicable in a non-profit public development)
- VAT (which may be exempt under EU rules for publicly delivered social housing)

Table 3: Total Recommended Investment to Support Ageing Well at Home in Budget 2027

Policy Recommendations	Required Investment	Department	Current/Capital
Access to Supports			
Improve access to digital health services	€785,000	Health	Current
Improve Access to Health and Medical Appointments	€115,000	Health	Current
Enhance Access to Nutritional Information	€175,000	Health	Current
Energy Poverty: Access to Information and Practical Supports	€21,900,000	Climate, Energy & Environment	Capital
Health and Wellbeing			
Invest in Primary GP Care services	€25,430,000	Health	Current
Expand community-based rehabilitation care beds	€70,000,000	Health	Current
Expand acute mental healthcare capacity for older adults	€32,000,000	Health	Current
Invest in Falls Prevention Community Exercise Programmes	€3,300,000	Health	Current
Invest in the Meals on Wheels Network	€10,000,000	Health	Current
Public Awareness Campaign on Nutrition for Older Adults	€500,000	Health	Capital
Invest €1.35m in the National Strategy on Loneliness	€1,353,000	Health	Current
Add Digital Assistive Technology to Aids & Appliances Scheme	€5,000,000	Health	Current
Increase Funding for Home Support Services	€75,440,000	Health	Current
Establish Statutory Home Support Scheme	€3,000,000	Health	Current
Expand carers' respite services	€37,090,000	Health	Current
Increase the Carers' Support Grant	€23,100,000	Social Protection	Current
Introduce a Carers' Basic Income and Basic Services Pilot	€10,000,000	Social Protection	Current
Housing			
Build 980 social housing units to support right-sizing	€291,760,000	Housing, Local Gov. & Heritage	Capital
Community Supports			
Establish Commissioner for Ageing and Older People	€1,200,000	Health	Current
Increase Community and Voluntary Sector funding	€60,000,000	Rural & Community Dev. & Gaeltacht	Current
Investment to Support Ageing Well at Home in Budget 2027	€672,148,000		
Current	€357,988,000		
Capital	€314,160,000		

Social Justice Ireland is an independent think-tank and justice advocacy organisation that advances the lives of people and communities by providing independent social analysis and effective policy development to create a sustainable future for every member of society and for society as a whole.



ALONE is a national organisation that enables older people to age at home. ALONE works with all older people, including those who are lonely, isolated, frail or ill, homeless or living in poverty. ALONE works towards a vision of Ireland where older people can age happily and securely at home and are strongly connected to their local communities.

