

‘Many older people are far from fulfilled. One by one the stars go out’

“It is valuable to hear fresh thinking outside the public private box in which we usually couch ageing” said the Ombudsman, Emily O’Reilly

Speaking as a mother, daughter, friend and neighbour, she said some fortunate older people continue to live in the full glare of the sun. “But many older people are far from fulfilled and happy. Loneliness, the death of a partner can mark the end of engagement with the world. One by one the stars go out.”

She was speaking at a briefing ‘A Third Way for the Third Age’ at Buswell’s Hotel, Molesworth Street, Dublin yesterday and called for a new approach to the current care needs of older people. “We need politicians, public bodies, families, older people themselves to honestly and humbly admit that we are far from what we would wish for ourselves, and, therefore, very far from what we would wish for older people” she said.

‘A Third Way for the Third Age’ aims at improving the range and quality of services available to older people through innovative public interest enterprise. The Reference Group for the initiative includes: Third Age, Southside Partnership, Cheshire Ireland, Irish Council for Social Housing, Order of Malta Ireland, Conference of Religious of Ireland, (CORI), Respond Housing Association, Genio, Crosscare, Trinity House, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, and Ageing Well Network.

The event was hosted by Third Age Ireland, a national voluntary organisation which coordinates a range of services which promote the value of older people in Ireland through volunteer activity and support more vulnerable older people through advocacy and a national listening help line service.

Speaking at the briefing, Jean Manahan, Head of National Development Third Age said: ““The reality is that older people who experience a crisis or a condition which requires higher level of supports have in reality only one option available to them which is long-term hospitalisation followed by institutional care. We can say categorically that all the financial incentives of our health care system favour institutional care over home care in spite of the fact that it is the avowed policy of successive governments to keep as many people as possible at home as they age. There must be a better way.”

Third Way Project Manager, Mervyn Taylor, described what ‘A Third Way’ hopes to do:

“There is a need to develop new supports and services based on identification of need. We will contribute to social and economic development by identifying opportunities for innovation and job creation, and attract additional resources through engagement with citizens, community and corporate groups. We aim to promote positive attitudes and approaches to ageing and inter-generational solidarity without denial of the inherent challenges” he said.

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