

PRESS RELEASE

MINISTER LYNCH ENDORSES WeDO PROJECT PROMOTING THE WELLBEING AND DIGNITY OF OLDER PEOPLE....

‘When you ask older people what they want, they say they want to be respected, valued and listened to,’ said Minister of State Kathleen Lynch speaking at the launch of the Wellbeing and Dignity of Older People (WeDO) project at the European Parliament office in Dublin yesterday, (January 29, 2013).

‘This Guide will go a long way to inform our thinking as to the care we should deliver to older people. This is the benchmark,’ she said.

The WeDO project is a European initiative involving 14 EU countries. The project has developed a comprehensive Guide, ‘European Quality Framework for Long-Term Care Services,’ which offers principles and guidelines for the wellbeing and dignity of older people in need of care and assistance and to protect them against elder abuse. WeDO is coordinated in Ireland by Third Age.

The numbers of older people aged 65+ in Ireland now number one in nine. These numbers are projected to increase, with the most significant increases occurring among older people in their late seventies and over. At present five per cent of older people in need of care are cared for in nursing homes, with 95% being cared for at home by family members and/or professional carers.

Similar to other jurisdictions, elder abuse in Ireland is not a new phenomenon. Since 2007 the Health Service Executive (HSE) has annually collated statistics on elder abuse referrals. 2011 saw a 10% increase in the number of such reported cases, with 2,302 referrals being received (*Open Your Eyes 2012*). However, a 2010 study by the National Centre for the Protection of Older People (NCPOP) estimated that over 10,000 community-dwelling older people experienced abuse in the previous year which demonstrates the under-reporting of elder abuse. The World Health Organisation estimates that elder abuse is under-reported by as much as 80%,

Irish WeDO has created a coalition of organisations in the health, education, research, advocacy, legal and social care areas in Ireland have come together to work for the improvement of services, and for a change in culture toward older people in need of care and assistance.

Yesterday, (January 29) the members of the Irish coalition called on the Minister to support the WeDO project and to incorporate its guidelines into the National Positive Ageing Strategy, due to be published this year.

The WeDO Guide offers 11 Quality Principles to inform and inspire the care of older people, with recommendations for policy makers, service providers, professional carers, older people, their families and informal carer organisations. These Quality Principles include such principles as Person Centred, Affordable, Respectful of Human Rights and Dignity. Today’s launch offers initiatives on the Guide’s implementation in Ireland.

Speaking at the launch, Louise Richardson, Vice President of AGE Platform Europe, which coordinated WeDO in Europe, provided a European context for the project and discussed its relevance with 2013 European Year of the Citizen. Dr Amanda Phelan, Co-Director of the National Centre for the Protection of Older People at UCD, discussed the connections between human rights, elder abuse and person centred care. 'Human rights should be equal for all no matter what age,' she said.

The Irish WeDO coalition members are Age Action Ireland, All Ireland Association of Gerontological Nurses, Garda Síochána, HSE, Irish Hospice Foundation, Law Reform Commission former chair, Mater Misericordiae Hospital, National Centre for the Protection of Older People, Nursing Homes Ireland, Older & Bolder, The Carers Association, Third Age, UCD, UCC and University of Ulster, Coleraine.

For more information contact Anne Dempsey, Head of Communications, Third Age, telephone 01-2875304/087-7459721 annedempsey@eircom.net