

Ms. Mary Butler, Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People of Ireland

First Ministerial Roundtable

Ensuring access to long-term care and support for carers and families

Excellencies, distinguished guests, dear colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Government of Ireland as Minister for Mental Health and Older People.

Our world is rapidly ageing. People are living longer lives, and the number of older people in the total population is growing. The successes achieved by so many countries in improving health and extending life expectancy should be acknowledged and celebrated.

In Ireland by 2041 people over 65 years will represent 20% of the total population. As a country we know that we need to put the correct measures in place now, to ensure that we meet, with creativity and balance, the challenges and opportunities that this shifting demographic will bring.

We are planning for a sustainable future, as we speak Ireland is examining the strategic workforce challenges associated with front-line carer roles in home support and nursing homes. A cross-Departmental Strategic Workforce Advisory Group has been established to examine recruitment, retention, training, pay and conditions, and the career development of front-line carers.

As a Government we are committed to ensuring carers and families are properly recognised, supported and empowered. It is important we take actions now to ensure we have a robust network of carers to support our ageing populations.

In keeping with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing our Government policy in Ireland is to support older people to live in dignity and independence in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. This accords with the wishes of most older people. However, there will always be a cohort of people who require long term residential care. It is vital that residential care is available for those that need it.

We have a national scheme of financial support for all those requiring long term residential care. The Nursing Homes Support Scheme is a means tested scheme of financial assistance for

those who need long term nursing home care, whereby participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means, while the state pays the balance of the cost. The aim of the scheme is to ensure that long term nursing home care is accessible and affordable to everyone. One of the key principles of the scheme is that nobody will pay more than the actual cost of their care, and a participant will only pay for the amount of time they actually spend in care.

The Irish Government is committed to providing housing options for older people, reducing barriers to care and overall allowing people to age with dignity. We cannot overlook the needs of older persons if we are to build inclusive, resilient, and age-friendly societies that supports the implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the achievement the 2030 Agenda and WHO Decade of Ageing.

We shoulder a collective responsibility. Transformative change will take the full commitment and support of us all.

Thank you.