

New Cuts Hurt Older People

ALONE SHOCKED AT FURTHER CUTS SET TO AFFECT MOST VULNERABLE

The Department of Social Protection has announced €65 million in cuts to fuel, telephone, gas and electricity allowances

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ALONE, the charity which combats isolation, loneliness and homelessness among vulnerable older persons, has condemned the Government decision to apply cuts to the free gas and electricity allowances given to pensioners. ALONE has warned that this €65 million in cuts to fuel, telephone, gas and electricity allowances will mean that the most vulnerable in society will now face greater hardships and risks this winter as many older people rely on these payments to warm their homes in the colder months.

Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE said, “As older people are generally more susceptible to feeling the cold, have issues such as the dated quality of their homes, are more likely to have lower incomes and are sometimes less likely to seek help compared to the general population, they need to be protected from cuts which will affect their financial position when it comes to heating their homes. Issues such as cold and damp can have a damning affect on the health of an older person.”

“We are deeply concerned about the latest cuts to be faced by older persons, in particular the reduction in gas and electricity units to pensioners, with the gas allowance cut by 20% and electricity allowance cut by 25%. It is unacceptable that the €65 million in savings on fuel, phone and electricity and gas payments are to come at a price paid by some of the most vulnerable in our society,” commented Moynihan. “Just this year ALONE Community Response Service distributed €200,000 to 1,000 households in need as part of the Bord Gáis Assistance Scheme which offered support to those struggling with gas and heating payments, with an average of €200 going to each household and now we are left to contemplate even greater hardship this coming winter.”

He continued, “We at ALONE understand that cuts have to be made where possible, however following the news that Bord Gáis is set to increase electricity prices by more than 10% and will apply for a gas price rise of 20% to 30% these cuts are an additional blow to the most vulnerable in society who find themselves at serious risk of developing cold related illnesses. We urge anyone who has concerns about their fuel and electricity prices to contact us for advice. We will ensure that any calls we receive will be dealt with discretely and swiftly.”

ALONE can be contacted on (01) 679 1032, and further information can be seen on www.alone.ie.

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For further information or to speak with Seán Moynihan, please contact Kathryn Byrne or Karen Morgan, Limelight Communications on 01 668 0600 or 085 233 6033