

New Fuel Poverty Risk For Older People

ALONE expresses concern at the impact on older people of recent cuts in fuel allowances, and fuel price increases

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ALONE, the charity which supports and houses older persons in need, has expressed alarm and serious concern at the impact on older people of the announcement of recent cuts to allowances and yesterday's announcement of an imminent increase in gas prices.

(To download this release as a pdf click here [Fuel Allowance Cuts And Price Rises](#))

The Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD, recently announced a 19% drop in allowances for gas and electricity for older persons, and a removal of the allowance for smokeless fuel.

This, linked to a 22 % increase in gas prices, means that the cost of heating this winter will go up for some by 41%.

“We are extremely concerned about the impact of these cuts and increases on the older persons across the country living on the basic State pension of €230. We are concerned for older people that they will have to cut back on the use of fuel, particularly if the winter weather this year is as bad as in previous years,” commented Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE.

“Our service users typically live on the fringes of society, are isolated and require assistance. These types of measures only serve to further marginalise vulnerable older people, and we call on the Minister to secure an agreement that price increases will not affect those most at risk of fuel poverty,” he continued.

Fuel poverty is considered to exist where a household spends more than 10% of income on heating costs – in the case of older people ALONE work with, this 10% amounts to only €23 a week.

ALONE are also emphasising that for older people there is a direct link between warmth and their health.

A recent report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies in the UK entitled “Is there a ‘heat or eat’ trade-off in the UK?”, found evidence that significant reductions in food spending were observed in response to temperatures being colder than expected. The reductions in food expenditure were considerably larger in poorer households.

Last winter with a donation from of Bord Gáis ALONE helped over 1,000 people who were experiencing difficulty with their bills in a scheme that was significantly over-subscribed. With this potential 41% hike in costs ALONE expect a substantial increase in calls for support, and are worried about their ability to cope this winter.

ALONE, established in 1977, provides supports in the community, a vital befriending service, and over 100 permanent housing units for older persons in need of support. For those with concerns, the organisation can be contacted at (01) 679 1032.

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