

ALONE STATEMENT ON FUEL POVERTY CONFERENCE IN DUBLIN TODAY

Dublin, 6th February 2012

ALONE, the charity which provides support for older persons in need of assistance welcomes the current two day conference in Dublin Castle on fuel poverty, as this highlights one of the key areas for concerns for charity. The threats faced by older persons who are dealing with fuel poverty have increased significantly in recent years as a result of ongoing cutbacks, fuel price increases, challenging weather conditions and the overall economic climate.

ALONE has voiced its concern on numerous occasions about the devastating impact that fuel poverty can have not only on older persons but across society in general. New figures which emerged at today's conference, from Dr Anne O'Farrell from the HSE, show that of the 3,000 'excess' winter deaths between 2005-09 among over 65s more than 400 of these were directly related to the internal temperature in people's homes.

ALONE's CEO Seán Moynihan commented "Today's conference in Dublin Castle is a welcome opportunity for a cross section of society including business, energy providers, the public and the media to raise awareness of this critical issue which has a very real impact on many people's everyday lives. We are shocked at the figures which emerged today which show that almost 2/3's of the 650 annual average excess winter deaths among over 65s were a direct result of the internal temperature in older people's homes. This very clearly shows that a significant percentage of older persons do not have adequate resources to keep their homes sufficiently warm. How many older people need to die before fuel poverty is taken more seriously by government?"

He continued, "At ALONE our staff and volunteers are made acutely aware of this issue, on a day to day basis, as older persons suffering fuel poverty contact us and our resources are continuously tested as a result of the worsening situation in relation to this issue. It is vital that government and other bodies involved in providing support tackle this issue with determination."

Severe cold weather can have drastic effects on older people with existing health problems. People aged over 65 are 7 times more likely to be admitted to hospital as a result of low temperatures compared with those aged 18 to 44. There is a significant rise in mortality rates among over 65's during the winter period. Those facing fuel poverty are more acutely affected by such conditions.

For older persons who has concerns in relation to fuel poverty can contact ALONE on 01 6791032.

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For further information contact Glenn Hogarty / Tara Carey at Limelight Communications on 01 668 0600 / 087 7909670