

**STATEMENT: ALONE expresses concern at announcement of Airtricity gas and electricity price increases**

**Dublin, 14 September 2012** ALONE, the charity which provides supports and housing for older persons in need, has expressed serious concern at the impact on older people of the announcement earlier today by Airtricity of an imminent increase in the price of gas by 8.5% and electricity by 4.7%.

Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE, commented, "This additional increase, on top of last year's substantial increases, will have an impact across the board. But it will be more acutely felt by older people for whom heat is not a luxury, it is an essential. Last year there was a 19% drop in allowances for gas and electricity for older persons, and a removal of the allowance for smokeless fuel, along with a 22% increase in gas prices. We think that this announcement will be very distressing for people already struggling on a day-to-day basis."

"We are extremely concerned about the impact of this new increase on the older persons across the country living on the basic State pension. We are concerned for older people that they will have to cut back on the use of fuel, which can lead to health problems. For older people, there is a direct link to warmth and their health," he continued. "The continued increase in fuel prices will lead to fuel poverty being a more real threat to a greater number of people."

Fuel poverty is defined as where a household spends more than 10% of income on heating costs – in the case of the older people ALONE work with this is only €23 a week. Figures from Dr Anne O'Farrell of the HSE published in February this year show that of the 3,000 'excess' winter deaths between 2005-09 among over 65's more than 400 of these were directly related to the internal temperature in people's homes.

ALONE, marking its 35th anniversary in 2012, 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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For further information please contact Kathryn Byrne, Limelight Communications, 085 233 6033