

ALONE RESPONDS TO COUNCIL OF EUROPE REPORT ON EFFECT OF IRISH BUDGET CUTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Publication of report today from Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights states that "Budget cuts planned in Ireland may be detrimental for the protection of human rights. It is crucial to avoid this risk, in particular regarding vulnerable groups of people."

Dublin September 15, 2011 ALONE, the charity which supports older persons in need, has welcomed the publication of a report by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe, which warns of the impact of proposed budget cuts in Ireland on vulnerable people. This report also expresses worry in relation to the allegations of neglect and abuse of older people in private care homes.

CEO of ALONE, Seán Moynihan commented "ALONE has consistently expressed serious concern at the impact on vulnerable older people of recent increases in the cost of fuel and energy, a reduction in allowances, and other proposed taxes, including property tax. Our concerns are further highlighted by the publication of this report from the Council of Europe, and we urge Government and those in positions of influence to take heed of this report. When austerity measures are being considered or implemented, we are calling for an exemption for older persons on restricted incomes. We have found that recent cuts have had a significant impact on the already minimal standard of living for these people, and further cuts will be unrealistic and will drastically affect their wellbeing."

He continued, "We hope that this report will add weight to our ongoing calls for awareness of the difficulties faced by older persons in the wake of price increases and allowance cuts. We welcome the publication of the report, the findings of which support our experience on the ground day-to-day in dealing with vulnerable older persons. We are continuously faced with ongoing requests for assistance from older people who are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. We will continue to work with and support other organisations which have a common objective, that is to ensure that vulnerable sectors of Irish society are not further marginalised by cuts."

On allegations of abuse of older people in private care homes, the Commissioner's report notes: "Investigations into such allegations should be conducted also with a view to strengthening the protection of residents of care homes in the future. The more the aging population increases, the more important it becomes that social protection systems, health care, housing policies and also anti-discrimination legislation including in the labour market, are suitable for older people."

Concluding, Seán Moynihan commented "We will also continue to monitor the situation in relation to allegations of abuse of older people in private care homes, and we are grateful that the Commissioner has raised this as a very real concern. We will continue to call for regulation of the sector, and provision of excellent services to those in need of them. We reiterate that community supports should be

more actively considered to allow people to grow old with dignity in their own homes.”

For those in need of assistance or support, ALONE can be contacted on (01) 679 1032.

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