

Outdated CSO Figures

ALONE STATEMENT ON CSO FIGURES ON POVERTY AMONG OLDER PEOPLE

Dublin, September 29th 2011

ALONE, the charity which provides support for older persons at risk, has expressed concern at the publication of figures from the CSO which show a fall in the risk of poverty for people aged over 65, between 2004 and 2009.

(To download this statement as a pdf please click here [Concern Re CSO Figures](#))

“These figures are data from two years ago and in the meantime standards of living for older people have been seriously affected by relentless cutbacks in State services and allowances for older people, such as the recent cuts in fuel allowances,” warns Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE. “Our experience in the last year suggests that the numbers are, in fact, heading in the opposite direction with a significant increase in older people at risk; Between July and December 2010 we received 1,300 requests for assistance, a jump of 50% on the previous six months, with 240 emergency interventions by ALONE’s Community Response Service which supports vulnerable older people in crisis. On any one day we are supporting 330 older people and our Community Response Service is averaging 30 crisis interventions every month.”

“Working daily on the ground with older people who are experiencing extreme financial difficulties, we would urge the public not to forget that there is a significant number of older people living on the State pension who are reliant on social transfers which are reducing and leaving them at real risk of poverty and in need of assistance,” commented Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE. “Also, the total population above 65 is about 500,000 so even 9.6% at risk of poverty two years ago still represents a large figure of about 50,000 older people at risk nationwide.”

He continued, “ALONE works with the one in ten of older people who are classed as vulnerable. Ireland’s National Action Plan Against Poverty states that people are ‘living in poverty if their resources (material, cultural, and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable generally by Irish society’. This is a good description of the circumstances which face many of the older people we support who struggle with loneliness, disability and ill- health and living in in sub-standard housing conditions. Often they are isolated, desperate and afraid and see no way out of their situation.”

“Last winter we distributed €200,000 to more than 1,000 households where older people were suffering fuel poverty (which occurs when a household has to spend more than 10% of its income to maintain adequate heating). This

scheme was sponsored by Bord Gáis: In the absence of a similar scheme this year we anticipate the cumulative effect of cuts in allowances and fuel price rises having a devastating effect on the older people in need with whom we work every winter and whose health is directly dependent on adequate home heating. Older people living on low incomes often have to make sacrifices and are forced to choose between basic needs that most of us take for granted such as 'to heat or to eat'."

He concluded, "In providing permanent housing for almost 100 older people who were at risk of homelessness, we are acutely aware of the effect of poverty on vulnerable older persons, and re-iterate that poverty, isolation, and loneliness are very real and increasing threats to the wellbeing of many older people. Our resources are stretched to the maximum but ALONE is committed to maintaining a consistent quality of service when and where we are needed and to extending our services where necessary."

ALONE will next month publish their annual report detailing the level of demand for their services, and the broad range of issues they encounter on a daily basis.

For older persons who have a concern about their wellbeing, or those concerned for an older person, ALONE can be contacted on (01) 679 1032.

Tags: [Alone's Community Response Service](#), [CSO](#), [fuel allowances](#)