

ALONE MAKES PRESENTATION TO MINISTER FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION ON BUDGET PROPOSALS



Friday July 5th 2013: ALONE, the charity which provides support and services for older people in need, will call on the Government to protect the one in ten older people at risk of poverty in upcoming budget. The charity will tomorrow join with a number of other organisations making presentations to Minister Joan Burton on pre-budget submissions. The charity will continue its call on the Government to consider long-term implications of budget cuts on the most vulnerable members of society, urging the Minister to maintain current allowances and to reverse cut to the Household Benefits among others.

Minister for Social Protection Joan Burton TD invited a number of interested parties to make presentations to her department tomorrow on pre-budget submissions. ALONE is one of over thirty organisations who will make presentations to the Minister based on their written submissions. During the course of the presentation, ALONE's CEO Seán Moynihan intends to highlight the importance of protecting the one in ten older people who are at risk of poverty.

"ALONE has seen calls for assistance jump significantly in recent weeks, with the volume of calls being dealt with now equivalent to the number of calls we would take at our busiest time of year, the middle of winter. This is showing that ongoing cuts in allowances, grants and home help hours is having a particularly negative effect on older people in need. We work with marginalised older people on a daily basis and we're witnessing the damage caused as a result of cuts which have a direct impact on the wellbeing of these older people," commented Seán Moynihan.

He continued, "Tomorrow is an opportunity for us to stand in front of the Minister and speak to her department about the vital need to consider the wellbeing of these older people when considering the upcoming budgets. Our presentation will allow us to put a case forward, on behalf of the people we work with, directly to the Minister and to highlight specific areas that must not be cut, and where in some cases allowances and grants need to be reinstated."

On maintaining the state pension, he commented, "We know the department of social protection is mainly involved in the payments of pensions. There is no point if these

payments are maintained at current levels, when taxes and service cuts erode the ability to live independently. Over 80% of older people are reliant on the state pension and so are living on very little, therefore increased costs, taxes and or cuts in services can have a disproportionate effect.”

Highlighting the significant affect of the cuts by other departments in home help hours, he commented “Cuts to care packages are a false economy. These supports are low-cost, high-value alternatives to long-term residential care or acute hospital care.”

The key proposals being put forward by ALONE include:

- All cuts should be equality-proofed so that their impact does not fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable.
- Every cut should have a counter-measure to protect those who are most at risk.
- Entitlements should be taxed as income, as an alternative to universal cuts which disproportionately affect those in need.
- Clarity of available entitlements for older people should be made a priority and those entitlements should be given a statutory footing.
- A social housing policy should be developed which takes into account of the specific needs of an ageing population.
- All budgetary proposals and government policy decisions and procedures should be proofed against the National Goals of the Positive Ageing Strategy.

Commenting on the proposals in the ALONE submission, Moynihan stressed that “A budget concerned with social protection must take into account the specific needs of those people who are most at risk and socially marginalised. 1 in 10 older people depend on the state as a primary carer and often on charities such as ALONE to advocate for them and to coordinate services. Our proposals to the Minister are based on our day-to-day experiences working with older people in need and our knowledge of the devastating impact that austerity has already had on many.”

ALONE service users come from among the one in ten older people who are at risk of poverty. The charity provides assistance to older people in need of support through a volunteer befriending service, a community response service and provides 100 age-friendly homes with lifetime tenancies in a supportive environment for older people at risk of homelessness.

Older people in need of assistance can contact ALONE on (01) 679 1032. www.alone.ie