

ALONE urges people to check in with their older neighbours during the current cold spell

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With extreme cold weather forecast by Met Eireann for the coming days, ALONE is urging members of the public to check on their older neighbours, family and friends who live alone. Extreme cold temperatures can have a serious affect on many older people, in particular those living alone, those with health issues, and those with limited mobility. ALONE is calling on older people who are concerned about their own wellbeing during the cold weather to call for assistance and help if needed.

Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE commented that “Continuing cuts and increases in fuel costs have put people under growing pressure in relation to heating their homes and we are conscious that the cold hurts older people more acutely. It’s vital that older people are proactive in staying warm during the forecasted severe cold snap. As previous years have shown us the cold weather can be very damaging for older people and we are calling on all members of the public to remember their older neighbours living alone and to consider their needs.”

Those who have concerns for an older person, or older people in need of assistance can contact ALONE on (01) 679 1032. The charity, which depends on donations from the public, has volunteers and staff ready to act on requests for assistance, and works with other charities and bodies to ensure all calls for assistance are responded to. ALONE can assist and advise on issues relation to food, heat, or medication.

Older people are advised to stay warm in cold weather by ensuring they have adequate heat; that they wear layers of light but warm clothing; eat at least one hot meal per day; take frequent, gentle exercise to keep warm; and to stay indoors. Older people are also advised to have a list of important phone numbers close to their home phone.

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.

Seán Moynihan continued, “The damaging effects of cold weather are not always seen straight away, a variety of health problems can arise afterwards. With many older people having to chose to “heat or eat” a visit from a member of the public to check on their heating levels in particular, but also food consumption, adequate security, and simply to offer some human contact can have a huge affect.”

