

Wednesday, March 23, 2005

Age Concern's response to increases in Council Tax for 2005-06

Gordon Lishman, Director-General of Age Concern, said:

"These Council Tax increases will cause misery for millions and pensioners are set to suffer once again. It's scandalous that the basic state pension is rising by just £2.45 yet the average council tax bill is set to soar by £47.

"The £200 promised to the over 65s in last week's Budget will ease the strain for many but bills have soared in recent years and a long-term solution to the problem is desperately needed. Older people want to know that they have money in their pockets to pay their rising bills - they don't want to rely on one-off payments.

"The Government must replace Council Tax with a fairer system which is linked to people's ability to pay and deliver a higher Basic State Pension of at least £109 per week to all pensioners.

"Benefits such as Pension Credit and Council Tax Benefit are available to help pensioners struggling to make ends meet. But the numbers not claiming are staggering. Up to 1.8 million older people are still missing out on up to £870 million of Council Tax Benefit each year - putting in a claim could cut the average pensioner's bill by £470 a year."¹