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AGE CONCERN'S RESPONSE TO DWP RESEARCH INTO NEW DIRECT PAYMENT SYSTEM

Gordon Lishman, Director-General of Age Concern said:

"The new pension and benefits payment system may be proving popular with some pensioners but it's time the Government woke up to the anxiety it's causing to thousands of others.

"A bank account is not an option for some older people and the Government's plan to post a weekly cheque out to these people is simply not good enough. Many older people manage their money on a weekly basis and delays in receiving a cheque through the post could leave them with little or no money while they are waiting.

"The Government must put forward a more practical alternative to Direct Payment, such as sending several cheques together so that people are not entirely dependent on the postal system to deliver their weekly pension.

"It's good the Government wants to introduce a pension payment system fit for 2004 not 1944 - it would be better still if the rest of the pension system was overhauled to reflect the needs of people today."