

Tuesday 15 March 2005

**Age Concern's response to Social Exclusion Unit's 'Excluded Older People' report published today 14/03/05**

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

"The Government's recognition of the need to tackle isolation and social exclusion among older people is a real step forward.

"Half of those aged 75 and over live alone compared to just 12 per cent of 25-44 year olds. At the same time 1 in 5 pensioners lives in poverty. As the report '*Excluded Older People*' points out, pensioners living on the lowest incomes experience the greatest exclusion, disadvantage and ill health.

"Preventative services that can respond to what older people really need such as basic home visits from a volunteer \* can help reduce social exclusion and the chance of a crisis happening.

"We now want to see a clear action plan from the Government and a commitment to delivering change that will help improve the quality of life of millions of older people."

\*Befriending services, a lifeline for housebound and isolated older people, are run by many Age Concern groups and organisations throughout the UK. In addition to friendship, many volunteers may offer support with shopping, household tasks and help with claiming money benefits.