

Thursday December 2, 2004

Age Concern's response to the PRE-BUDGET REPORT

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

"This is incredibly disappointing for older people. Older voters could decide the result of the next General Election but have once again been largely ignored by the Chancellor."

Increases to the Basic State Pension/ Pension Credit

"The basic state pension is disgracefully low and small increases each year are not good enough. Almost two million pensioners are still living in poverty. Although it's good news that the level of Pension Credit will increase it's now well over a year since it was introduced and almost a third of pensioners¹ still aren't claiming it. The Government must do more to get this extra cash to older people - too many are still missing out and living a poverty-stricken retirement. The Government should move away from means-testing and increase the basic state pension to at least £105 per week."

Help with Council Tax (to be paid through the Winter Fuel Payment)

"The one-off payment of £50 for the over 70s will help some older people with their bills but is a short-term gesture by the Government. Inflation-busting council tax increases in recent years have caused misery for millions. What is really needed is a higher basic state pension so older people feel they have enough money in their pocket every week to heat their homes and pay essential living costs. We need a system of taxation instead which is based on people's ability to pay as well as the value of their property."

Women & Pensions

"Increasing the level of the basic state pension is good for some older people but will not help the millions of women, carers and low paid workers who aren't even eligible because of an outdated system. Despite repeated promises, the Chancellor has failed to give women a fair deal which recognises the value of their unpaid work."