

Senior Help Line notes an increase in calls from worried callers ahead of Budget 2015

“... I'm worried about the cost of my medication’

“... I could have to make the choice between eating or heating . . .”

Tuesday, 7th October, 2014 – *“... I'm worried about the cost of my medication the concern of* one distressed caller to Senior Help Line as budget 2015 approaches.

Senior Help Line has noted an increase in calls from older people in recent days who are concerned about the upcoming budget. Callers are worried about money matters, potential increases to the cost of living and further cuts to vital services in their areas. They are concerned about how the budget will affect them and there is a fear that further allowances or benefits will be lost. Others worry is about the imposition of additional service charges, such as the water and prescription charges, which have already been introduced.

While some older people have retired on good pensions affording some measure of security, for others the story is very different. Many older people are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Data released in the Global Age Watch Index 2014 showed that the incidence of poverty among older people is on the rise in Ireland. The report indicated that old age poverty has reached 7.6pc, which is a 12.1pc increase on previous years.

Current Senior Help Line experience affirms this increased poverty among older people. The non - contributory state pension offers recipients a basic rate of €219 per week, and with no means of increasing their income, many pensioners can become very stressed about finances. Financial worries become more serious as the winter months approach, as one caller said recently, *“I could have to make the choice between eating or heating”*.

Senior Helpline's Anne Dempsey notes: *“Many older people are being pushed further into poverty and every day on the helpline we hear about the struggles they are faced with. We urge the government not to make any further cuts to one of society's most vulnerable groups. Many older have relatively little or nothing to spare at the end of each month, so even a small negative adjustment can have a big effect.”*

“The lead up to the budget can be a time of terrible worry and stress for some callers and we urge any older person who is worried about issues concerning finances, health, family or any other matter to call us on 1850 440 4442”, she says.

Senior Help Line provides a listening service for older people for the price of a local call anywhere in Ireland. Calls are answered by trained older volunteers. This helps create empathy between caller and listener, and can help the caller discuss their problems more easily.

Senior Help Line is available, for the price of a local call, 365 days a year from 10am -10pm. Call 1850 440 444, all calls are handled in strict confidence.

ENDS

About Senior Help Line

Senior Help Line is a confidential listening service for older people by trained older volunteers for the price of a local call anywhere in Ireland. Senior Help Line is a project run by Third Age.

About Third Age

Third Age is a national voluntary organisation celebrating the third age in life when people may no longer be in paid employment, but can remain healthy, fulfilled and continue to contribute to society. Through a variety of local and national programmes, Third Age demonstrates the value of older people remaining engaged and contributing in their own community for as long as possible.

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Issued by Murray Consultants on behalf of Senior Help Line.

