

Age Action welcomes decision not to cut State Pension -- older people will be hit by other cuts

Age Action has welcomed the Government's decision not to reduce the State Pension, but warned that older people dependent on other social welfare payments will be hit by cuts announced in today's Budget.

The fact that the Government has decided to exempt the State Pension from the cuts means that some older people will be protected from falling further into poverty," Age Action spokesman Eamon Timmins said. "With one-in-ten older people at risk of poverty and many more hovering around the poverty line, any cut in the State Pension would have caused huge hardship."

"However, for widows under-66, those on invalidity pension and carers will all be hit." (See below for details).

The older people's charity also welcomed the once-off EUR40 for those receiving the fuel allowance. "This is a small gesture, but a welcome one for older people who are concerned about turning on their heating for fear of receiving a large bill," Mr Timmins said. "But it does not come close to compensating older people for the carbon tax which the Government introduced on home heating oil and gas in May."

Age Action is concerned at the lack of detail in today's Budget. It will watch closely to see what impact funding cuts have on the health service. "A substantial cut to the HSE's budget would undoubtedly have a negative effect on older people and the community-based services they depend on to remain living with dignity in their own homes," Mr Timmins said.

"For those older people who depend on the State for their income or health services, the full impact of this budget has still to be seen, but it would be wrong to present them as winners in today's Budget," he said.

Cuts announced in today's Budget for pensioners and carers included:

- Widows/widowers contributory pension under 66 decreased from EUR201.50 to EUR193.50 (no change for over 66's)
- Invalidity pension for under 65's personal rate decreased from EUR201.50 to EUR193.50 and for a person with a qualified adult under 66 from 345.30 to 331.60. For a qualified adult aged over 66 under invalidity pension decrease from EUR407.80 to EUR399.80.
- Carer's benefit decrease from EUR213 to EUR205.

- Personal rate of widow/widowers non-contributory pension personal rate decrease from EUR196 to EUR188.

- Care allowances for people under 66 years decrease from EUR212 to EUR204 (no change for people aged 66 years and over)

- Supplementary allowance payment to blind people in receipt of blind pension 61 to 58 and for a blind couple by EUR12 to EUR117.