

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MONDAY 19 OCTOBER 2009**

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**TARGETED ADVICE, INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY ARE KEY TO  
ERADICATING PENSIONER POVERTY, SAYS NATIONAL CHARITY**

The Government's response to the report of the Work and Pensions Committee into pensioner poverty published today (19 October 2009) has received a muted welcome from Counsel and Care, the national charity working with older people, their families and carers to get the best care and support.

Counsel and Care looks forward with interest to the results of the 20 Pension Credit take-up campaigns across the country to see what more can be done to ensure that the neediest older people in our society can access vital financial help during the recession.

We also support the Government's statutory commitment to continue to uprate Pension Credit at least in line with average earnings and to increase the capital disregard to £10,000, not least as it highlights the vital role that advice, information and advocacy can play in promoting public awareness of such changes and encouraging take-up by those older people on low incomes who may at last be eligible for urgently needed support.

However, Counsel and Care challenges the Government's refusal to increase the Personal Expenses Allowance for older people in care homes to £40 per week

from its current rate of £21.90 per week. Older people living in care homes part-funded by the council in England will continue to be severely compromised by this decision as they are forced to make difficult choices about essential living expenses and day-to-day expenditure that most take for granted. Older people without savings or family will have no other money to draw on if their costs exceed this derisory amount.

Stephen Burke, Chief Executive of Counsel and Care, said: "If the Government is to confront pensioner poverty head on, the only way forward is to work in partnership and utilise the expertise of the third sector. Through supporting national provision of independent and user-friendly advice, information and advocacy tailored to the needs of individuals there will be better public awareness, more older people able to access benefits they are entitled to and further inroads in eradicating the stigma still felt by many around claiming money from the state.

"However, vulnerable older people in care homes must not be forgotten in the push to improve current levels of pensioner poverty. It cannot be right that in the drive towards transformation of the care and support system, those older people with the highest needs, the lowest incomes and the quietest voices continue to be disregarded."

**-ENDS-**

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- Copies of Counsel and Care's submission to the Work and Pensions Select Committee Inquiry into Tackling Pensioner Poverty in Great Britain can be downloaded from:

[http://www.counselandcare.org.uk/assets/library/documents/DWP\\_pensioner\\_poverty\\_submission\\_Feb\\_09.pdf](http://www.counselandcare.org.uk/assets/library/documents/DWP_pensioner_poverty_submission_Feb_09.pdf)

- For more details on Counsel and Care's Advice Service work with local authorities contact Helen Finch, Development Officer on 020 7241 8534 or [helen.finch@counselandcare.org.uk](mailto:helen.finch@counselandcare.org.uk)
- Counsel and Care is a national charity working with older people, their families and carers to get the best care and support. Advice on issues affecting older people and carers can be obtained by calling 0845 300 7585 or emailing [advice@counselandcare.org.uk](mailto:advice@counselandcare.org.uk)
- Counsel and Care's Advice Service opening hours are 10am-4pm Monday-Friday except Wednesday afternoons.
- More information about Counsel and Care can be obtained from [www.counselandcare.org.uk](http://www.counselandcare.org.uk)