

## Paper 1 – Section B: Writing to persuade, argue, advise.

*During a recent very cold spell, Age Concern brought to the attention of the public, the fact that many elderly people suffer and die because of the substandard damp and cold conditions in which they live.*

Is it up to the government to improve the living conditions of the elderly, or should we be doing it ourselves?

In this essay, I will argue for the proposal that it is the responsibility of the government to improve the living conditions of elderly people and to advise them how they should go about it.

As we all know, this year's winter has been the coldest winter for 30 years, but imagine the impact of this on our elderly citizens. The London Met Office announced that this winter's average temperature was just 1.5°C, that is a chilling temperature which is barely above freezing point. Over Christmas and at the beginning of this year, the country saw a blanket of snow plunge transport networks into turmoil. Ice shut airport runways, roads were gridlocked and trains broke down. If the average, young or middle-aged citizen finds it difficult to survive in conditions like this, imagine how the elderly must find the conditions of this year's winter.

This brings me to talk about how elderly people must suffer from the freezing cold in their homes, vulnerable to many kinds of hazards, right from their front door step. Icy conditions have led to hundreds, even thousands more hospital admissions this year in the United Kingdom – most of these admissions have been elderly people. I think it is up to the government to improve the elderly person's home, or give the elderly person a supply of salt or grit which could help them to fight the icy conditions they are subject to in the winter months. So, do we really want another 40,000 people to die during the coldest months of the year, between December and March, or should we try to do something about it?

In general, elderly people obviously do not have very much money. With the price of oil and gas increasing, it is becoming increasingly hard for elderly people to heat their homes, not to mention extremely inconvenient. For elderly people to heat their homes via gas, they would have to make a journey to the nearest pay-point (which is quite unrealistic in the winter months due to freezing cold temperatures and icy conditions, where loads of elderly people fall and dangerously hurt themselves). Last month, at the height of the cold spell, a few friends and I were out enjoying the snow, throwing snowballs at each other, and having fun. When an elderly person was brought to our attention, walking down some icy steps to reach the shop in my estate, it made all of us feel uncomfortable. A little woman was struggling to hold onto the freezing cold bar, which led down the length of the steps. It didn't help that near the bottom there was a partially broken step, fortunately the elderly woman

made it down the steps, across the road and into the shop safely, but what would happen if next time an old man or woman wasn't so successful, what if he or she fell on the icy steps. Who knows what could happen? Anything. This is why the government really need to put their minds to it and try to come up with a solution to the problems that old people face in the times of cold.

What happens when the elderly have no one to care for them, they can't afford private care, they don't want to go into a care home, and family are living away from them or abroad? Picture this, walking into an elderly persons home, the bitter cold hits you in the face and a musty smell surrounds you, these are the conditions an elderly person has to live in, no help, no one to care for them, all day they would probably just be sat in a chair in a corner of a room with a blanket round them trying to keep warm. But blankets just don't work. A good heating system needs to be in place for this person to stay warm and mainly – alive! This is where I think the government should step in and make a system that is more elderly friendly, where the old men and women do not have to leave their house to buy gas, or be charged over £200 at a go to top up a huge oil tank which sits out in the back garden. We desperately need something in place to overcome this, because it is just not ideal for the new conditions we have faced this year with the cold spell upon us. If it was your grandmother or grandfather, would you be comfortable for them to be living like this? I know I wouldn't!

After considering all of the above points, I really do believe that the government need to step in and do something about this. Elderly people need help from the government to reduce household hazards and icy conditions in their own gardens. Heating the elderly people's home is something which needs to be considered by the government to make it friendlier for elderly people to keep their homes heated. The government spends thousands of pounds a year on state caring homes; why not use some of the profited money from these on granting some of the elderly people a small sum of cash which could help them to pay for gas and oil prices. I think that with some consideration, many changes could be put into place to help the elderly and improve our country to make it a better place for the men and women who have spent all their lives working for us!