

PE1480/O

Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport
Shona Robison MSP

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot



Michael McMahon MSP
Convener
Public Petitions Committee
c/o Public Petitions Clerks
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP



Your ref: PE1533
2 November 2015

Dear Michael

Thank you for your letter of 7th October in relation to Petition PE1533 by Jeff Adamson.

I welcome the Committee's decision to conjoin its consideration of Petition PE1533 with that of Petition 1480, by Amanda Kopel, as both petitions concern charges for non-residential social care.

As I stated in my evidence to the Committee on 6th October, the Scottish Government does not believe that it would be fair or equitable to remove charges for one condition or set of conditions.

In my evidence, I highlighted the work that my officials and analysts have been undertaking, in collaboration with Professor David Bell from the University of Stirling to produce an analysis of the costs involved in various options for improving the fairness of the system of charging for social care. More specifically, his advice was helpful in clarifying what the likely costs may be of extending free personal care to those under 65 and for raising the income threshold at which charges are applied.

Our estimates include the initial cost of removing charges, and the longer-term costs, factoring in those people who would currently meet eligibility criteria, but currently do not receive local authority-provided care. The longer-term costs, factoring in additional demand from those who would be eligible, are more difficult to accurately forecast, but must be taken into account, in the light of our experience of growth of demand in the roll-out of Free Personal and Nursing Care since 2002.

	Estimated cost range for existing use (£/year)	Estimated cost range including additional demand (£/year)
Removing charging for all non-residential services for all age groups (personal and non-personal care) As called for by PE1533.	£55m	c. £300m

As I explained in my evidence to the Committee on 6th October, we are in the midst of the Spending Review period and we await the UK Government's decisions on the level of the Scottish budget. Our decisions on this issue as part of the Spending Review must also take into account the need to ensure that resources are in place to maintain and enhance our current support for social care, including the cost of maintaining our policy of free personal care for over 65s, in the context of an ageing population, and the need to address recruitment and retention issues in the care sector.

You ask about my current views on the need for a roundtable discussion on the fairness of non-residential social care charges. My view remains that the COSLA Charging Guidance working group continues to be the most appropriate forum for considering issues related to charging for non-residential social care, including discussion of options to raise thresholds or otherwise improve the fairness of the system.

SHONA ROBISON