

Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport
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John Pentland MSP
Convenor, Public Petitions Committee
Room T3.40
Scottish Parliament
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Dear John,

PE 1480 by Amanda Kopel on Alzheimer's and Dementia Awareness

Thank you for your letter of 3 June, in connection with Petition PE 1480 by Amanda Kopel.

Scottish Government officials have been engaged with COSLA on the issue of charging for social care, and recently discussions took place at COSLA's Charging Guidance Working Group around the issue of anti-poverty measures and increasing fairness and consistency of charging for social care. COSLA have made proposals around raising the thresholds at which charging is applied, in order to raise those least able to afford to make a contribution towards the cost of their care out of charging. We are undertaking work over the course of the summer to determine the costs of this and the benefits to individuals.

Your letter suggests a discrepancy between COSLA's letter of 20th April and my response to the Committee of 5th May. There is no discrepancy as the issue of extending Free Personal Care to people under 65 is a different proposition to that of considering alterations to charging thresholds.

As I stated when I gave evidence to the Committee earlier this year, I am sympathetic to the views expressed by Amanda Kopel based upon the difficulties she experienced in caring for her late husband, Frank.

I have also stated that it is important to consider charging as part of the wider social care system. We need to ensure that resources are in place so we have the quantity and quality of social care that our people require. During my meeting with Mrs Kopel in January, I explained to her that it would be inappropriate and unfair to base decisions on charging on the basis of specific conditions as called for by the petition, and that singling out one condition would not be fair to those with other long-term, life-affecting conditions, and could be considered discriminatory. I note that this view was also expressed by Alzheimer Scotland in their response to the petition in December 2013.

In relation to the considerations being weighed during the Scottish Government's work on the petition's proposals, we are determined that any changes to the system for charging for social care must be affordable, sustainable, and, above all, fair. This means ensuring that resources are in place so we have the quantity and quality of social care that our people require. I will of course, keep the committee informed of progress made in this matter.

SHONA ROBISON