

Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport
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In 2014 Scotland Welcomes the World



Your ref: Petition PE1533
18 December 2014

Dear David

Thank you for your letter inviting me to provide written evidence to the Public Petitions Committee, and to attend the Committee on 27 January 2015 to give evidence.

I am sympathetic to the aims of the petition and am determined that the Scottish Government should take action to improve the consistency and fairness of the current approach to charging for non-residential care.

The Scottish Government has held in reserve its powers under the Community Care and Health Act 2002 to set charges for social care, on the understanding that COSLA will work with local authorities to ensure greater consistency on the charges made to service users for their social care.

We are aware that COSLA is currently consulting with local authorities on the introduction of a standard financial assessment template with an aim of producing that greater consistency. We await the results of that consultation early next year, and will consider then whether, if implemented, this achieves the aim of greater consistency which we have asked COSLA to achieve.

The COSLA working group on charging for non-residential care produces the annual guidance under which local authorities set their charging policies. The group has worked towards greater consistency, but we acknowledge that there is still work to be done to improve this. Following the intervention of the Scottish Government, the group has achieved consistency in the application of disregards for terminal illness, as no-one who is in the last 6 months of a terminal illness should now be charged for the care they receive at home.

As stated above, the Scottish Government is determined to ensure that there is greater consistency and fairness in the charging for non-residential social care. I await the deliberations of COSLA leaders on the introduction of a standard financial template, and will consider after that decision has been made whether there is any additional need for intervention to ensure that the charges are fair and consistent.

SHONA ROBISON