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*Dear Joan,*

Thank you for your email of 9<sup>th</sup> November 2016, bringing to my attention the issues around the approach to charging for social care in Dumfries and Galloway. Further to my response to your oral question (S5O-00405) on this subject on 30 November I will explain the position.

As I said in response to your Question, I'm disappointed that Dumfries and Galloway have chosen to reduce the threshold for social care charges.

The Scottish Government provided £6m additional funding to local authorities in 2016/17 to tackle poverty, and if those people on the lowest incomes are worse off now than they were as a result of these changes to Dumfries & Galloway's charging thresholds, then clearly that goes against the intention of the additional funding to the local authority to reduce charges.

While I am disappointed that Dumfries and Galloway Council have chosen to adopt a lower income threshold for people under the age of 65, Scottish Government funding has ensured that the threshold at which they begin to be charged for their social care has not been lowered to 16.5%.

I would hope that Dumfries and Galloway Council will seriously consider the representations made locally and in the Parliament on this issue.

Service users, who feel that they have additional disability related expenditure or are facing financial hardship as a result of the charges, may provide evidence of these costs and Dumfries and Galloway Council will consider this based on the facts received on an individual case basis. Wherever an individual service user is facing undue hardship, Dumfries and Galloway Council is prepared to review their case.

Data provided by COSLA shows that of the 19 local authorities which responded to its charging survey, 14 have a threshold of £132 per week, 4 have a higher threshold level of £195, and one does not charge for social care services.



We will discuss with COSLA the different treatment of disability premiums and pension credit in its charging guidance.

Despite a challenging funding context, we are working towards fairer charging for social care. As well as the £6m to address charging thresholds, we have committed to conducting a feasibility study into the extension of free personal care to those under the age of 65 with a diagnosis of dementia, and will exempt from April 2017 all income from War Pensions and the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme from social care financial assessments.

Please let me know if you would like any further information on our approach to fairer charging.

Best wishes,  
Shona.

**SHONA ROBISON**