



Department for
Communities and
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Thank you for your letter of 25 August to the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, on behalf of [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] about attendance allowance. I am replying as this falls within
my ministerial responsibilities.

The Department has received a number of letters in response to our proposals to review support for older people that are identical or very similar to the correspondence received from [REDACTED]. We understand these to be part of a wider campaign, organised by charities with an interest in these proposals - such as Age UK. We therefore propose to publish this response online to make our reply available to the wider public with suitable redactions to prevent the disclosure of any personal information (such as the name and address of [REDACTED]). If you or [REDACTED] do not wish for this to happen, then please let me know by reply within one week from the date on this letter.

The current system of care support for older people is fragmented: people can get benefit payments from the Department of Work and Pensions, health care from the NHS and care services from local authorities. The Government wants to explore if there is a better way to provide support for older people with care needs through local provision. We would of course consult further in good time if any changes were proposed to Attendance Allowance, including on the right model for devolution and the appropriate level of flexibility that local councils would have. We don't want to create difference for difference sake but the needs of older people and the best means of meeting them can vary.

In particular, the implications for carers would be thoroughly considered as Government recognises the vital role that informal carers play in families and communities; and the substantial contribution that they make to the sustainability of the health and care system. We are committed to continuing to support carers to provide care as they would wish, and to do so in a way that minimises the detrimental impact on their own health, wellbeing, employment and other life chances. The Department of Health is currently leading the development of a new cross-Government Carers Strategy, intended for publication later this year.

If the proposal to devolve Attendance Allowance funding were to proceed, we have been clear that only new applicants would be affected, so those already claiming Attendance

Allowance would not be in scope. Any new responsibilities for local government would also be matched by the transfer of the equivalent spending power.

You are correct that there is an open consultation which mentions attendance allowance, this is actually a broader consultation on plans to devolve 100% of business rates to local councils by 2020. The current consultation was issued on 5 July by the Rt Hon Greg Clark MP. By the end of the Parliament, local government will retain 100% of taxes raised locally. This will give councils control of an additional £12.5 billion of business rates to spend on local services. This move towards self-sufficiency and away from dependence on central Government is something councils have long campaigned for – it will shape the role and purpose of local government for decades. As part of this reform we are considering the devolution of additional responsibilities to local government to ensure there is no additional burden on the taxpayer. This is an open consultation and I would encourage anyone with views to feed these in through that process.

The consultation “Self-sufficient local government: 100% business rates retention” closes on 26 September 2016 and is available here: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/self-sufficient-local-government-100-business-rates-retention

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