



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

Rt Hon George Howarth MP  
House of Commons  
London  
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Dear George

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*Minister for Local Government*

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Thank you for your letter of 5 October to the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, attaching an example of the concerns raised by a number of your constituents, about proposals to devolve Attendance Allowance funding. I am replying as this falls within my ministerial responsibilities.

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 – and as part of this, on 5 July the Rt Hon Greg Clark MP issued a consultation on plans to devolve 100% of business rates to local councils by 2020, which mentioned Attendance Allowance.

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.

As your constituents have stated, the consultation closed on 26 September. We are currently considering the responses (including from organisations that raise similar concerns to your constituents) and will set out our position in due course. 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.

Please rest assured that 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. In the meantime you may wish to note that the Department of Health is currently leading the development of a new cross-Government Carers Strategy, intended for publication later this year.

Yours sincerely,



**MARCUS JONES MP**