

**PE1419/C**

**PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION OF PE1419  
QUESTIONS ARISING FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS  
(See 'Written submissions' for responses)**

**TUESDAY 20 MARCH 2012**

**Scottish Government—  
Age Scotland—  
Anchor—  
West of Scotland Seniors Forum—**

- What is your response to what the petition seeks?

Petition PE1419 by Jimmy Deuchars calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to create a dedicated Minister for Older People.

**Scottish Government response**

The titles and tasks of Ministers in the Scottish Government are a matter for the First Minister.

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy, Nicola Sturgeon, has overall responsibility for issues affecting older people.

There are two important points here –

- first, that this position is at Cabinet level in the Scottish Government – some of our stakeholders are concerned that a dedicated Minister for Older People might not be a Cabinet Minister, and that this might lead to a diminution of the Cabinet Secretary's current role; and
- second, generally there are benefits in mainstreaming issues, so they are the responsibility of Ministers for housing, transport, health, social care etc. Appointing a Minister for Older People marginalises older people – everyone assumes anything to do with older people falls to that Minister, and places less priority on work to do with older people.

As part of her role, the Deputy First Minister has made it clear that improved care for older people is a priority for this Government. Making a keynote speech to the Alzheimer Scotland Dementia Awareness Week Conference on 6 June, shortly after taking office following the May 2011 elections, she said she had made improved care for older people her personal priority in this Parliament.

The Scottish Government is taking forward many actions that benefit older people. These include:

- the freeze on council tax, introduced first in 2008-09 and now frozen for the fifth year running (2012-13) – this particularly benefits older people on fixed incomes;
- continuing commitment to Free Personal and Nursing Care;
- continuing commitment to the National Concessionary Travel Scheme, introduced in April 2006 which provides free Scotland-wide bus travel for older people;
- the National Strategy for Housing for Older People, launched on 20 December by the Minister for Housing and Transport;
- the major ongoing work on Reshaping Care and the Reshaping Care Change Fund
- the National Dementia Strategy, launched in June 2010;
- the Diabetes Action Plan, launched in August 2010; and
- the Self-directed Support Bill, published on 1 March.

The Scottish Government is committed to protecting and advancing the rights of older people in Scotland. That is why it is also supporting the Scottish Older People's Assembly, to give older people a stronger voice in Scotland. It first met in October 2009 and has met each year since – the date for the 2012 Scottish Older People's Assembly has recently been confirmed as Friday 2 November at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre.

**John Storey**

Older People and Age  
Equality and Communities  
DG Governance and Communities  
Scottish Government

18 April 2012