

The Rt Hon Mel Stride MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Ministerial Correspondence Team
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Dear Secretary of State

Housing Benefit – War Pensions Disregard

I refer to the Housing Benefit regulations which provide local authorities with discretionary powers to operate a local scheme for those in receipt of war pensions in the assessment of Housing Benefit. The effect of these powers means some or all of any War Disablement Pension, War Widow's Pension and War Widower's Pension over and above the statutory limits, may be disregarded when calculating entitlement to Housing Benefit.

Where local authorities exercise this discretion, the Department for Work and Pensions currently provide funding equivalent to 75% of local schemes, with the implementing local authority funding 25% of the cost. Given the valuable support this scheme provides for war veterans, war widows and war widowers, the Highland Council is fully supportive of these legislative provisions and has been operating a local scheme for several years.

Also from a Housing Benefit perspective, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Department for sharing plans relating to the managed migration to Universal Credit and for the ongoing engagement with local authorities. We have noted that migration will be implemented at pace and will therefore continue to assess the local impacts for claimants, and for the Council's budget and demand for local services.

Given the Council's financial pressures, all expenditure is being reviewed, as are current and future factors influencing service demand, design and delivery. This includes the anticipated local impacts of Universal Credit managed migration.

Councillor Derek Louden
Chair, Corporate Resources Committee

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At a recent meeting of the Council's Corporate Resources Committee, it was agreed that I write to you to request that the national funding model for the war pensions discretionary scheme be reviewed.

The Council is seeking the removal of the current requirement for implementing local authorities to contribute 25% of the cost of their individual local schemes, and for war pension disregards in the assessment of Housing Benefit to be fully funded by the Department and therefore be mandatory disregards.

I do hope you will view this request sympathetically and in the broader context of Universal Credit managed migration and potential impacts for local authorities. Should your advisers wish to discuss this matter, I would be grateful if they could liaise with Sheila McKandie, Head of Revenues & Business Support, by email to sheila.mckandie@highland.gov.uk.

I have taken the opportunity to copy my letter to CoSLA's Resources Spokesperson, Councillor Katie Hagmann, for information.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Derek Louden
Strategic Chair
Corporate Resources Committee

Cc Councillor Katie Hagmann, Resources Spokesperson, CoSLA

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