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Dear Jackie,

Thank you for your letter of 11 July regarding rising fuel costs for the health and social care sectors.

In terms of the recent decision to temporarily raise mileage allowance for the NHS workforce, as you know, this was taken by NHS Scotland's Terms and Conditions Committee Secretariat and, as such, is outwith the remit of the Scottish Government and was funded from within existing NHS budgets.

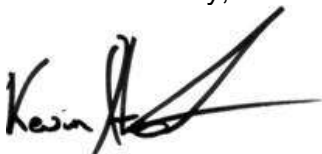
I am, however, very aware of the pressures that the recent increases in fuel costs are placing on the sector and particularly on those workers who need to use their own vehicle to carry out their duties and haven't benefitted from any increase in mileage allowances.

In terms of social workers, under current arrangements, terms and conditions are set by individual employers. The majority of social workers are employed by councils, resulting in local variations in pay, grading and terms and conditions, but as with social care workers, I would encourage all employers to pay at least the 45p mileage rate provided for under UK HMRC rules.

Looking forward, the objectives of the proposed National Social Work Agency will be to invest in the social work profession by providing national leadership, and overseeing and supporting social work in areas such as improvement, workforce planning and terms and conditions.

In the meantime, in terms of social care workers, my officials are actively engaged with our partners including local government and care providers to understand what impact the increase in fuel prices is having across Scotland, and to formulate the steps we can take to ensure that these workers can continue to deliver the invaluable support they provide to the people of Scotland.

Yours Sincerely,



Kevin Stewart

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