

LETTER TO RT. HON. JEREMY HUNT, CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, REGARDING THE UNPRECEDENTED COST OF LIVING CRISIS FACING UNPAID CARERS – ORGANISED BY CARERS UK

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London, SW1A 2HQ

11 November 2022

Dear Chancellor,

Unpaid carers and the cost of living crisis

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer. We wanted to write to you ahead of the Autumn Statement to bring to your attention the severe impact the cost of living crisis is having on unpaid carers of all ages. This group of people urgently need more targeted financial support from the Government if they are to continue caring for their disabled, ill, or older friends and family members.

Providing unpaid care for others can have a significant impact on peoples' lives, especially women who are more likely to take on an unequal share of caring responsibilities in the home. Indeed, for many people it is one of the most difficult and challenging things they will ever do. We estimate that as many as 10.6 million people are now providing some form of unpaid care across the UK; the staggering levels of care and support that they have provided during the pandemic, estimated to be worth around £193 billion per year, has undoubtedly played a key role in supporting our formal health and social care systems as you know from your time as Secretary of State for Health and the Chair of the Health and Social Care Select Committee. But this has come at an enormous personal cost to unpaid carers, in terms of their health, wellbeing, their ability to partake in paid work, and – crucially, for the purposes of this letter – their finances.

We warmly welcomed the plans to cap the unit price of energy for every household. This will be a relief to many carers. However, while we recognise that the cost of living crisis is impacting almost everyone in our society, unpaid carers are a particularly vulnerable group when it comes to financial difficulties. Carers face all types of rising costs due to their limited ability to earn an income and because they cannot cut back on certain costs without affecting the safety of the person they care for – they have to keep their heating on to ensure the person they care for is warm and use life-saving equipment that cannot be switched off.

Unfortunately, a significant proportion of unpaid carers who are only in receipt of Carer's Allowance – the lowest benefit of its kind at £69.70 per week – missed out on key

support measures introduced by your predecessors over the last two years. We estimate that this specific group of unpaid carers have each cumulatively lost out on nearly £3,000 in the past two years, compared to other recipients of social security. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 44% of working age adults who are providing unpaid care for more than 35 hours a week are in poverty. The Department of Work and Pension's Family Resources Survey found that 1 in 5 households in receipt of Carer's Allowance are living in food insecurity – nearly three times the rate of the general population. Carers UK's recently published research - [Heading For Crisis](#) - also speaks to the extremely precarious financial situations that many carers now find themselves in, most often through no fault of their own:

- Over a quarter (27%) of carers said they were struggling to make ends meet. Carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance were more likely to be struggling to make ends meet (39%).
- The proportion of carers unable to afford their utility bills has more than doubled since last year (14%, up from 6% last year).
- Carers who had been caring for longer were much more likely to be struggling financially. 19% of people caring for over 5 years were in debt as a result of caring, compared to 9% of people caring for less than 5 years.
- A quarter of carers (25%) said they were cutting back on essentials such as food or heating, nearly twice as many compared to 13% last year. Carers receiving Carer's Allowance were even more likely to be cutting back on food and heating (35%).
- The majority of carers (63%) said they were 'extremely' worried about managing their monthly costs. 77% said that the rising cost of living was one of the main challenges they would face over the coming year.

It is now vital that carers – particularly those on low incomes or who rely on Carer's Allowance and other legacy benefits – are immediately provided the financial security they desperately need. To that end, we ask that the Government:

1. Uprates all benefits, including Carer's Allowance and the Carer Element of Universal Credit, in line with current levels of inflation before next April – ideally as soon as possible – to ensure that vulnerable groups can survive the winter months.
2. Provide a top up payment for unpaid carers with an entitlement to Carer's Allowance to support them through the winter and recognise the additional costs they are facing amid the unprecedented cost of living crisis.
3. Raise the earnings limit for Carer's Allowance to the value of 21 hours work a week at the National Living Wage rate (i.e., £199.50), to allow carers to work more hours a week where they are able to do so, without losing their entitlement.
4. Review all carers' benefits, including Carer's Allowance, to ensure that these work well at supporting all types of unpaid carers and preventing them from falling into financial difficulties as a result of their caring role.

Providing greater support for unpaid carers is not only the right thing to do for society and our economy but is also supported by an overwhelming percentage of the public. Indeed, 69% of the public feel that the role of unpaid carers is not well valued, and 84% agree that the Government should provide additional support to unpaid carers.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your timely response.

This open letter was organised by Carers UK and sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP, on 11 November 2022. Please see a list of signatories to this open letter below:

Helen Walker, Chief Executive, Carers UK
Kari Gerstheimer, CEO, Access Social Care
Jamie Gault, CEO, Action for Carers Surrey
Steve Johnson, Chief Executive, AdviceUK
Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director, Age UK
Raina Summerson, CEO, Agincare
Tom McMurdo, Director of Finance and Resources, Blackpool Carers Centre
Jennifer Twist, Chief Executive, Care for the Carers (East Sussex)
Craig Backhouse, Director, Carer Support Cumbria
Dani Leslie, CEO, Carer Support Eden
Lorraine Goldberg, Executive Director, Carers Centre SA LTD
Alison Taylor, Chief Executive, Carers First
Michèle Stokes, Chief Executive, Carers in Hertfordshire
Linda Lawless, Service Manager, Carers in Southampton
Claire Turner, Chief Executive, Carers Leeds
Debra Blakey, Chief Executive Officer, Carers Northumberland
Jess Wade, Chief Executive Officer, Carers of East Lothian
Christine Whiley, CEO, Carers' Resource
Richard Meade, Director, Carers Scotland
Lee O'Brien, Chief Executive Officer, Carers Together
Kirsty McHugh, CEO, Carers Trust
Sharon Brooks, Chief Officer, Carers Voice Norfolk and Waveney
Justine Bilton, Chief Executive, Carers Wakefield & District
Jill Attwell, CEO, Carers' Support East Kent
Miriam Martin, Chief Executive, Caring Together
Lisa Ray, General Secretary, Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance
Suzi Henderson, CEO, Cloverleaf Advocacy
Amanda Batten, CEO, Contact
Melanie Blanksby, Chief Executive, Dementia Carers Count
Hilda Hayo, Chief Admiral Nurse and CEO, Dementia UK
Eric Appleby, Chief Executive, Disability Law Service
Kamran Mallick, CEO, Disability Rights UK

Yvonne Hocken, Mental Health Practitioner, East Lancashire Child and Adolescent Services (East Lancashire Hospital Trust)
Pamela Burke, Chief Executive, Enfield Carers Centre
Christopher Wetton, Chief Executive, Essex Carers Support
Jemima Olchawski, Chief Executive, Fawcett Society
Simon Fenton, CEO, Forward Carers CIC
Craig Backhouse, Chief Executive Officer, Furness Carers
Christine Fewster, CEO, Hartlepool Carers
Toby Porter, Chief Executive, Hospice UK
Glen Garrod, Executive Director of Adult Care & Community Wellbeing, Lincolnshire County Council
Alex Massey, Head of Campaigning, Policy and Public Affairs, MND Association
Nick Moberly, CEO, MS Society
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Tracy Hawkins, CEO, Sandwell Young Carers
Pauline Kimantas, CEO, Sheffield Carers Centre
Alan Ashton, Chief Executive, St Helens Carers Centre
Susanna Jones, CEO, Swindon Carers Centre
Nanette Mellor, CEO, The Brain Charity
Tom Lambert, CEO, The Carers Centre for Brighton & Hove
Carol Boys, Chief Executive, The Down's Syndrome Association
Rachel Power, CEO, The Patients Association
Helen Wildbore, Director, The Relatives & Residents Association
Andy Fletcher, Chief Executive, Together for Short Lives
Christine Alexander, CEO, TuVida
Jonathan Senker, Chief Executive, VoiceAbility
Carole Cumino, Chief Executive, Worcestershire Association of Carers
Sue Stockman, Director of Carers Services, Your Voice in Health and Social Care (Carers Lewisham and Ealing Carers)
Anela Anwar, CEO, Z2K