

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

**Carer
Poverty
Coalition**

15 November 2023

Dear Chancellor,

Support for unpaid carers in the Autumn Statement

As members of the Carer Poverty Coalition, ahead of your Autumn Statement on 22 November, we write to bring to your attention the financial hardship and poverty that many unpaid carers are now facing.

Unpaid carers urgently need more targeted financial, social care, and employment support from the UK Government so that their finances and health and wellbeing are not further jeopardised while they continue to provide care and support for disabled, ill, or older friends and family members.

Many unpaid carers cannot easily increase their income through employment, nor lower their expenditure by making economies due to the additional care-related costs they face. Many are unable to combine caring and paid work, for example, and many cannot turn down their heating or lower their energy bills as the person they care for may require a constantly warm or cool home or need to operate specialist equipment.

Our collective evidence shows that the combination of low levels of social security benefits and the rising cost of living is still causing severe hardship for far too many carers.

For example, Carers UK, who lead the Carer Poverty Coalition, recently found in their [State of Caring](#) research with over 11,000 carers that:

- 75% of unpaid carers receiving Carer's Allowance are struggling with cost-of-living pressures.
- 34% were more likely to be struggling to afford the cost of food.
- 72% are worried about the impact of caring responsibilities (e.g., petrol for hospital visits, heating, specific dietary requirements) on their finances.

These findings are corroborated by Carers Trust who, in their [recent survey](#) of unpaid carers, found that only 38% of respondents said Carer's Allowance was enough to make a meaningful difference to them.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation also recently conducted [research](#) looking at the long-term financial penalty that carers face – they found that people experience an average pay penalty of £414 per month (nearly £5,000 per year) reaching £628 per month (nearly £8,000 per year) after six years of providing unpaid care.

On behalf of unpaid carers, we collectively urge the UK Government to make an investment in people across the UK who are providing unpaid care worth an estimated [£162 billion a year](#), according to the University of Sheffield. To that end, we ask that you:

- Reform the benefits system to better support carers, including increasing means-tested benefits relating to carers (e.g., Carer Element, Carer Premium and Carer Addition).
- Ensure all social security benefits, including Carer's Allowance and its associated premia, are uprated by at least the rate of inflation when rates for 2024/25 are announced later this year.
- Hold a full review into Carer's Allowance and its eligibility rules, so that carers can continue to provide unpaid care whilst also being able to look after their own health, wellbeing and financial security.
- Increase the level of Carer's Allowance, so that it better reflects the level of financial penalty carers incur.
- Raise the Earnings Limit for Carer's Allowance, and link this to future increases in the National Living Wage.
- Ensure there is equal financial support for carers across the UK.
- Scrap the 21-hour rule across the UK, so that carers in all nations can study and care.
- Provide more support for older carers of State Pension age, in the form of additional payments to support them with their unpaid caring role.

In addition, we call on you to set out funded measures across social care and employment to enable, encourage and support unpaid carers to have breaks, look after their own health, and – for working-age carers – to enter the workplace, return to it, or stay in work for as long as possible alongside their caring role. This should include:

- Long-term and sustainable funding of social care to support carers juggling paid work and care with appropriate breaks.
- Specialist support for carers who have not been in paid employment for some time, including financial and practical support, work placements and confidence-building.
- Changes to the eligibility criteria for certain carers' benefits to enable more carers to combine paid work and unpaid care, to enable both more paid work and higher paid work for carers.

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

Yours sincerely,

Helen Walker, Chief Executive, Carers UK
Kari Gerstheimer, CEO, Access Social Care
James Clark, Chief Executive Officer, Action for Family Carers
Caroline Abrahams CBE, Charity Director, Age UK
Caroline Lee-Davey, Chief Executive, Bliss
Helen Wildbore, Director, Care Rights UK
Craig Backhouse, Chief Executive Officer, Carer Support Furness
Alison Taylor, Chief Executive, Carers First
Michèle Stokes, Chief Executive, Carers in Hertfordshire

Claire Turner, Chief Executive, Carers Leeds
Craig Harrison, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Carers Northern Ireland
Alison Wright, CEO, Carers of West Lothian
Elizabeth McPherson, Chief Executive Officer, Carers Plus Yorkshire Ltd
Richard Meade, Director, Carers Scotland
Tim Poole, Chief Executive, Carers Support Centre, Bristol & South Gloucestershire
Tracy Weight, Chief Executive Officer, Carers Support Merton
Kirsty McHugh, Chief Executive, Carers Trust
Sharon Brooks, Chief Officer, Carers Voice Norfolk and Waveney
Claire Morgan, Director, Carers Wales
Lee Sewrey, Operations Manager, Caring for Carers at Improving Lives Plymouth
Andrew Burnell, Chief Executive, City Health Care Partnership CIC
Joanne Green, Director of Carers Services, Cloverleaf Advocacy (Carers Count)
Anna Bird, CEO, Contact
Pamela Burke, Chief Executive, Enfield Carers Centre
Christopher Wetton, CEO, Essex Carers Support
Simon Fenton, CEO, Forward Carers CIC
Stuart Tattersall, Chief Executive, Greenwich Carers Centre
Christine Fewster, CEO, Hartlepool Carers
Sarah West, Director of External Affairs, Hospice UK
Sabine Goodwin, Director, IFAN
Abby Jitendra, Principal Policy Adviser, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Jacqueline Cannon, CEO, The Lewy Body Society
Tanya Curry, Chief Executive Officer, MND Association
Nick Moberly, Chief Executive, MS Society
Andy Barrick, Deputy CEO, Multiple System Atrophy Trust
Joanna Solanki, CEO, n-compass Towards a Brighter Future
Colin Smith, Service Manager, North Lanarkshire Carers Together
Claire Easton, Chief Executive, North Tyneside Carers' Centre
Dr Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, Chief Executive Oxfam GB
Juliet Tizzard, Director of External Relations, Parkinson's UK
Mark Winstanley, Chief Executive, Rethink Mental Illness
Robert Adamek, CEO, Rett UK
Melissa Wilks, CEO, Richmond Carers Centre
Kerry Jones Kensah, CEO, Sheffield Carers Centre
Kate Steele, CEO, Shine
Kirsten Alderson, CEO, Suffolk Family Carers
Susanna Jones, CEO, Swindon Carers Centre
Christine Alexander, CEO, TuVida
Paddy Lillis, General Secretary, Usdaw
Katy Styles, Founder, We Care Campaign
Rachel Kirby-Rider, Chief Executive, Young Lives vs Cancer

You can find out more information about the Carer Poverty Coalition here:
<https://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/carers-poverty-coalition/>