

**OPEN LETTER ORGANISED BY CARERS UK TO RT. HON. RISHI SUNAK MP,
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, REGARDING THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS
FACING UNPAID CARERS**

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London, SW1A 2HQ

18 March 2022

Dear Chancellor,

We are writing to you ahead of your Spring Statement on 23rd March 2022 to urge the Government to provide unpaid carers with increased and targeted financial support to help them cope with the unprecedented financial challenges that many are currently facing.

As you will know, unpaid carers often face additional and significant costs associated with caring, and many face financial hardship as a consequence of their caring responsibilities. It is common for carers to have higher energy costs when caring for someone who is unwell or frail, to help keep them warm and to manage their condition. Many carers also use special medical equipment which can be costly to run and face higher food bills because of nutritional requirements the people they care for have.

A significant number of unpaid carers are also unable to work, or can only work part time, due to their caring responsibilities – impacting the money they are able to earn, as well as their pension contributions. Because of the demographic nature of caring – these financial costs fall disproportionately on women.

Many carers have faced financial hardship through no fault of their own for many years, however, the current situation in the UK is now unprecedented – with inflation set to rise to 7% in April 2022, and energy bills commonly rising by over 50%, many carers are simply unable to squeeze their finances any further without additional support.

When we surveyed 3,300 carers in January, they told us that they are having to make extremely difficult choices about whether they eat or heat their homes. Many cannot afford both. Others are having to get into debt to manage their living costs or are turning to foodbanks and other means of support to cope. This is not sustainable and without urgent intervention, will lead to carers breaking down and being unable to continue caring for friends and family – instead passing the costs of doing so onto local authorities and the state. In the past two years, the care and support provided by unpaid carers has been staggering - £193 billion per annum, outstripping the entire cost of the NHS

Specifically, our recent research in early 2022 found:

- Just under half (45%) of all unpaid carers responding to the survey are currently unable to manage their monthly expenses.
- 46% of the carers surveyed felt the oncoming increases in energy bills will negatively affect their own physical and mental health or that of the person they care for.
- Many said they were having to take difficult steps to manage their monthly expenses; 58% are cutting back on heating and 14% have already fallen into arrears with their energy bills.
- Looking to the months ahead; 42% thought that they would not be able to heat their home to a safe level, and 32% are worried they will have to use a foodbank. Importantly, this research was undertaken prior to the unfolding crisis in Ukraine, which is expected to further impact energy and food prices.

Things are even tougher for carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance or the Carer Element of Universal Credit:

- 88% of carers who received Carer's Allowance or Carer Element with Universal Credit were worried they would have to cut back on heating.
- 58% were worried they would have to use a foodbank, while over half (55%) are worried that increased energy bills will mean they have to cut back on food.
- 87% said they felt stressed and anxious when thinking about their finances.
- 59% are worried about increased energy bills affecting the health of the person being cared for or their own health.

To ensure carers are supported during this extremely difficult time, particularly those on the lowest incomes, we are calling on the UK Government to immediately provide additional and targeted financial support for carers. In particular, we want Government to take immediate action to:

- (1) Increase Carer's Allowance and other benefits so they rise in line with current inflation predictions when benefit ratings take effect on 11 April 2022. Currently, Carer's Allowance is set to rise by only 3.1% in April 2022, while inflation (CPI) is expected to reach 7.25%.
- (2) Immediately extend the Warm Home Discount scheme to ensure that it includes carers on the lowest incomes. This would recognise the additional energy costs often faced by unpaid carers and provide targeted support to those most in need.

We also want to see the Government increase the level of carers' benefits including Carer's Allowance so that it is no longer the lowest benefit of its kind. We also need the earnings limit for those claiming Carer's Allowance to rise, so that it is at least equal to 16 hours work at the National Living Wage (and pegged to it in future years), and to provide a Carer's Allowance Supplement to all carers with an entitlement in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – as those in Scotland have received since 2018 – so all carers across the UK receive the same level of support.

It is not too late for the Government to step in and recognise the vital role unpaid carers continue to play in supporting those they care for, and to put in place the much needed financial support they require. It can only be right that we give back to those who have done so much for others over the past two years. Without additional help, many carers, and the people they care for, will face real and increased hardship and suffering.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. We, and millions of carers across the UK, look forward to your response.

This open letter was organised by Carers UK and sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt. Hon. Rishi Sunak MP, on 18 March 2022. Please see a list of signatories to this open letter below:

1. Helen Walker, Chief Executive, Carers UK
2. Kari Gerstheimer, Chief Executive, Access Social Care
3. Jamie Gault, Chief Executive Officer, Action for Carers Surrey
4. James Clarke, Chief Executive Officer, Action for Family Carers
5. Steve Johnson, Chief Executive, Advice UK
6. Grahame Cassidy, Chief Officer, Age Concern Tyneside South
7. Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director, Age UK
8. Fiona Carragher, Director of Research and Influencing, Alzheimer's Society
9. Mike Rich, Chief Executive, Barnet Carers
10. Anne-Marie Morris, Chief Executive Officer, Brent Carers Centre
11. Jennifer Twist, Chief Executive Officer, Care for the Carers
12. Jill Attwell, CEO, Carers' Support East Kent
13. Alison Taylor, Chief Executive, Carers First
14. Roma Mills, Interim CEO, Carers in Hertfordshire
15. Sally Prentice, Chief Executive, Carers Network
16. Richard Meade, Director, Carers Northern Ireland
17. Debra Blakey, Chief Executive Officer, Carers Northumberland

18. Jess Wade, Chief Executive Officer, Carers of East Lothian
19. Chris Whiley, CEO, Carers Resource
20. Fiona Collie, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Carers Scotland
21. Kirsty McHugh, Chief Executive Officer, Carers Trust
22. Pauline Steele, Chief Executive Officer, Carers Trust Tyne and Wear
23. Sharon Brooks, Chief Officer, Carers Voice Norfolk and Waveney
24. Claire Morgan, Director, Carers Wales
25. Lee Sewrey, Operations Manager, Caring for Carers at Improving Lives Plymouth
26. Rosa Hui MBE DL, Director, Chinese Community Wellbeing Society
27. Lisa Ray, General Secretary, Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance
28. Suzi Henderson, CEO, Cloverleaf Advocacy
29. Amanda Batten, CEO, Contact
30. Juliet Jeffrey, CEO, Crossroads Tendring & Colchester
31. David Ramsden, Chief Executive, Cystic Fibrosis Trust
32. Dr Hilda Hayo, Chief Admiral Nurse and CEO, Dementia UK
33. Rachael Dodgson, CEO, Dimensions UK
34. Kamran Mallick, CEO, Disability Rights UK
35. Carol Boys, Chief Executive, Down's Syndrome Association
36. Dr. Dani Leslie, CEO, Eden Carers
37. Pamela Burke, Chief Executive, Enfield Carers Centre
38. Phil Lee, CEO, Epilepsy Action
39. Simon Fenton, CEO, Forward Carers
40. Craig Backhouse, Chief Executive Officer, Furness Carers
41. Christine Fewster, Chief Executive Officer, Hartlepool Carers
42. Atholl Craigmyle, Finance Director, Hilton Nursing Partners
43. Craig Duncan, Interim Chief Executive, Hospice UK
44. John Palmer, Policy and Communications Director, Independent Age
45. Diane White, Chief Executive, Kingston Carers
46. Glen Garrod, Executive Director of Adult Social Services and Community Wellbeing, Lincolnshire County Council
47. Jackie O'Sullivan, Executive Director, Royal Mencap Society
48. Chris James, Director of External Affairs, Motor Neurone Disease Association
49. Sarah Rawlings, Executive Director of Research and External Affairs, MS Society
50. Karen Walker, CEO, Multiple System Atrophy Trust
51. Charlotte Augst, CEO, National Voices
52. Edward Gorringe, Chief Executive, Newcastle Carers
53. Claire Easton, Chief Executive, North Tyneside Carers' Centre
54. Sarah Miller, Chief Executive, Papworth Trust
55. Caroline Russell, Chief Executive, Parkinson's UK
56. Rachel Power, Chief Executive, Patients Association
57. Bernie DeLord and Jenny Tarvit, Directors, Promas CIC
58. Helen Wildbore, Director, Relatives & Residents Association
59. Mark Winstanley, Chief Executive, Rethink Mental Illness
60. Dr Roger Wicks, Associate Director, Royal National Institute for Deaf People
61. Tracey Hawkins, Chief Executive Officer, Sandwell Young Carers
62. Elizabeth McPherson, CEO, Scarborough & Ryedale Carers Resource
63. Pauline Kimantas, CEO, Sheffield Carers Centre
64. Kate Steele, CEO, Shine
65. Verinder Mander, Chief Executive Officer, Southwark Carers
66. Nik Hartley OBE, Chief Executive Officer, Spinal Injuries Association
67. Kirsten Alderson, CEO, Suffolk Family Carers
68. Alan Ashton, CEO, St Helens Carers Centre
69. Susanna Jones, Chief Executive, Swindon Carers Centre
70. Andy Fletcher, Chief Executive, Together for Short Lives
71. Paddy Lillis, General Secretary, USDAW
72. Cressida Campbell, University of East London
73. Jonathan Senker, CEO, Voiceability
74. Bernadette Ashcroft, Interim CEO, Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre
75. Carole Cumino, Chief Executive, Worcestershire Association of Carers
76. Jane van Zyl, CEO, Working Families
77. Rachel Kirby-Rider, CEO, Young Lives vs Cancer
78. Anela Anwar, CEO, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust