

**OPEN LETTER ORGANISED BY CARERS UK TO RT HON RISHI SUNAK MP,
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER**

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

03 February 2021

Dear Chancellor,

We are writing to you directly to urge the Government to provide unpaid carers with the additional support they need to care for others safely through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, and to recognise the incredible contribution they have made to date in confronting the COVID-19 pandemic.

To mark Carers Rights Day 2020, which took place on 26th November, Carers UK published a report which estimated that, after just eight months, the value of unpaid care provided during the pandemic stands at £135 billion – staggeringly, that means that each day of the pandemic, the value of carers' unpaid support has been £530 million.

Previous research Carers UK has undertaken during the pandemic found that the majority (81%) of carers have taken on more care since the start of the pandemic, while nearly two thirds (63%) of carers are extremely worried about how they will continue to manage over winter.

With every day that the pandemic continues, unpaid carers are pushed further to the limit, providing ever more care for loved ones with fast-diminishing support. They say they feel overlooked, overwhelmed, and that they cannot go on like this any longer.

With many crucial face-to-face support services, such as day centres and support groups significantly reduced – or in many cases closed – because of costly infection and control measures and falling funding, we are now extremely concerned that people caring round the clock are going to break down after months of caring without respite and crucial support.

We recognise that Government has already implemented measures in recent months to support unpaid carers – for example, by extending furlough to those with caring responsibilities whilst shielding was in place, by relaxing some of the rules associated with claiming Carer's Allowance, producing early guidance for carers, including carers within the priority list for testing and, in England, trying to ensure that the Infection Control Fund supports the return of day and carers' services. Other nation Governments have also brought in specific measures for carers including providing an

additional supplement for carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance in Scotland, providing Personal Protective Equipment to unpaid carers, giving carers priority access to a COVID-19 vaccine once available, as well as producing ID for carers.

However, our evidence from carers is that support is still falling short and we remain extremely concerned about the future. That is why we are calling on the Government to provide additional support for carers, to acknowledge the enormous contribution made by carers during this pandemic, and to immediately give back to carers by prioritising their health, wellbeing, resilience and support to work.

Specifically, it is vital that Government urgently reviews carers' breaks services and invests in them to ensure carers can take a significant break – ADASS recently called for a £1.2 billion cash injection from Government in England “to ensure unpaid family carers get the breaks they need over the coming months, to enable them to continue providing vital, life-saving care and support”.

We also want to see the Government provide a supplement of £20 a week to those carers with an underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance, currently just £67.25 a week, to match the increase made to Universal Credit earlier in the crisis. This would help carers providing 35 hours or more of unpaid care each week manage both the higher costs of caring in the winter and the lack of services available to help them stay in work.

Longer term, we are also urging the Government to commit to a New Deal for Carers – this needs to start with a tangible cross-cutting Government Action Plan and move to strong and robust delivery of support – while any future reform of the social care system must have strong, clear and defined benefits, as well as support for unpaid carers. It is vital that carers are involved in the development of these plans as well as in delivery.

We believe there is an opportunity to build a better future for carers and our evidence shows that we need to level up for carers as the pandemic has increased their inequalities.

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

We look forward to your response.

This open letter was organised by Carers UK and has been signed by 5,062 people. It was submitted to the Chancellor on 3 February 2021.