

Rt. Hon. Liz Kendall MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill St
London, SW1H 9NA

20 March 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to express our ongoing concerns about the continued rise in the number of outstanding Carer's Allowance overpayment debts.

Your announcement in October 2024 to establish an independent review, led by Liz Sayce OBE, was widely welcomed. We appreciate the progress the review team has made, particularly in gathering evidence from unpaid carers affected by these debts. We also recognise that, however swiftly the Government might implement changes, reform will take time.

Given this, we are concerned that the number of carers facing overpayment debts continues to rise. Comparing Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) figures for May 2024 and February 2025, the total number of outstanding overpayments has increased by over 9,000ⁱ, with 143,922 carers now affected.

This comes on top of the 71% rise in overpayments debts that occurred between 2018-19 and 2023-24, where the number of cases rose from 80,169 to 136,730ⁱⁱ, despite the issue being subject to significant investigation by parliamentary committees and the National Audit Office.

While we await the independent review's findings, we believe that the Government could be doing more to reduce the hardship unpaid carers are facing because of a fundamentally unfair system. Unless mitigating measures are implemented now, unpaid carers will continue to be affected by this scandal.

As a result, we are asking you to halt the creation of new Carer's Allowance overpayment debts until the independent review has concluded and its recommendations are implemented.

Once the independent review has concluded, we also ask that you:

1. Commit to publishing its final report in early Summer and implement its recommendations quickly.
2. Look to write off existing substantial overpayments debts where carers could have been notified sooner by DWP.

Under the current system, carers can lose a year's Carer's Allowance (£4,258.80) for exceeding the earnings threshold by as little as £52 annually (£1 a week). This cliff edge often forces carers to choose between poverty and debt. Many already struggle financially, and these debts impact entire households, including children and disabled

family members. It has also become very apparent that the lack of transparency around the way earnings are averaged is causing huge issues for unpaid carers.

Carers make an invaluable contribution to society. We want the system to reflect their worth, rather than leaving them in debt for trying to balance paid work and unpaid care.

We look forward to your timely response and hope to see urgent action on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

1. Helen Walker, Chief Executive, Carers UK
2. Kari Gerstheimer, CEO, Access Social Care
3. Tim Bevans, CEO, Action for Carers (Surrey)
4. Michelle Evans, Project Development Manager, Action for Carers Oxfordshire
5. James Clarke, Chief Executive Officer, Action for Family Carers
6. Giselle Hoad, Admin, Adult Social Care Warriors
7. Katherine Crawford, Chief Executive, Age Scotland
8. Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director, Age UK
9. Jen Clark, Economic Social and Cultural Rights Lead, Amnesty International UK
10. Keith Sinclair, Chief Executive, Brainwave
11. Anndeloris Chacon, CEO, Bristol Black Carers
12. Andrew Clark, Chair of Trustees, Buckinghamshire Disability Service
13. Geoff Fimister, Spokesperson, Campaign for Disability Justice
14. Jackie O'Sullivan, Co-chair, Care and Support Alliance
15. Ruth MacLennan, CEO, Care for Carers
16. Jennifer Twist, Chief Executive, Care for the Carers
17. Dr Dani Leslie, CEO, Carer Support Carlisle & Eden
18. Craig Backhouse, Chief Executive Officer, Carer Support Furness
19. Karen Irons, CEO, Carers Bucks
20. Lorraine Goldberg, Executive Director, Carers Centre SA Ltd
21. Alice Dias, CEO, Carers Hub Lambeth
22. Michele Stokes, CEO, Carers in Hertfordshire
23. Claire Turner, Chief Executive, Carers Leeds
24. Karen Irons, CEO, Carers Milton Keynes
25. Claire Spiden, Deputy Chief Executive, Carers of East Lothian
26. Carers Plus Yorkshire, CEO, Carers Plus Yorkshire
27. Heidi Watson, CEO, Carers' Resource
28. Fiona Collie, Head of Public Affairs and Communications, Carers Scotland
29. Jill Attwell, CEO, Carers' Support East Kent
30. Helen Wilson & Mike Humphries, Joint CEO, Carers' Support Service
31. Caroline Pope, Chief Executive Officer, Carers Support West Sussex
32. Kirsty McHugh, CEO, Carers Trust
33. Sophie Little, Co-Production and Project Officer, Carers Voice Norfolk & Waveney
34. Rob Simkins, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Carers Wales
35. Miriam Martin, Chief Executive, Caring Together
36. Joanna Cain, CEO, Citizens Advice Westminster
37. Sally Tsoukaris, General Secretary, Civil Service Pensioners Alliance (CSPA)
38. Simon Bull, Chief Executive, CMTUK

39. Francesca Yates, Executive Director, CommuniCare
40. Anna Bird, CEO, Contact
41. Vanessa Perkins, Engagement and Capacity Manager, Crossroads Caring for Life
42. Sonia Meikle, Welfare Benefits Manager, Croydon Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Support Group
43. Frances Lawrence, Chief Executive, Dementia Carers Count
44. Hannah Nicholls-Harrison, Co-chair, Disability Benefits Consortium
45. Andrew MacKay, Chief Executive, Disability Law Service
46. Kamran Mallick, CEO, Disability Rights UK
47. Michael Beckett CDir FloD, Chief Officer, Disability, Advice and Wellbeing Network
48. Alison Fuller, Director of Health Improvement and Influencing, Epilepsy Action
49. Cheryl Ward CBE, CEO, Family Fund
50. Simon Fenton , CEO, Forward Carers CIC
51. Ben Whalley, Chief Executive Officer, Gaddum
52. Steve Cowen, Chief Executive Officer, Gateshead Carers Association
53. Stuart Tattersall, Chief Executive, Greenwich Carers Centre
54. Christine Fewster, Chief Executive, Hartlepool Carers
55. Sara Redmond, Chief Officer of Development, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland
56. Atholl Craigmyle, Finance Director, Hilton Nursing Partners Limited
57. Cath Stanley, Chief Executive, Huntington's Disease Association
58. Caroline Collier, CEO, Inclusion Barnet
59. Sabine Goodwin, Director, Independent Food Aid Network
60. Abby Jitendra, Principal Policy Adviser, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
61. Paul Bristow, Chief Executive, Kidney Care UK
62. Rachael Stokes, CEO, Kingston Carers Network
63. Maria McCaul , Coordinator, London Unemployed Strategies LUS
64. Jackie O'Sullivan, Executive Director of Strategy and Influence, Mencap
65. Jonathan Gibson, Campaigns Lead, Metabolic Support UK
66. Alex Massey, Head of Campaigns, Policy and Public Affairs, Motor Neurone Disease Association
67. Shelley Elgin, Director for Wales, MS Society Cymru/Wales
68. Andy Barrick, Chief Executive, Multiple System Atrophy Trust
69. Alan Markey, Chair, National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers (NAWRA)
70. Tim Nicholls, Assistant Director of Policy, Research & Strategy, National Autistic Society
71. Sharon Brennan, Director of Policy and External Affairs, National Voices
72. Joanna Solanki, CEO, n-compass Towards a Brighter Future
73. Luke Bramhall, CEO, Newcastle Carers
74. Colin Smith, Manager, North Lanarkshire Carers Together
75. Anna Capper, Deputy Chief Officer, North Staffs Carers
76. Silvia Galandini, Domestic Poverty Lead, Oxfam GB
77. Juliet Tizzard, Director of External Relations, Parkinson's UK
78. Bernie DeLord, Director, Promas Caring for People CIC
79. Mary Durman, CEO, Promise Inclusion Ltd
80. Shameem Ahmad, Chief Executive Officer, Public Law Project
81. Abby King, Head of Policy and Communications, Reading Welfare Rights

82. Graham Whitham, Chief Executive Officer, Resolve Poverty
83. Mark Winstanley, Chief Executive, Rethink Mental Illness
84. Esther Mmbago, Advice Manager, Richmond AID
85. Vicky Keeley, CEO, Sefton Carers Centre
86. James Watson-O'Neill, Chief Executive, Sense
87. Verinder Mander, Chief Executive Officer, Southwark Carers
88. Alan Ashton MBE DL, Chief Executive, St Helens Carers Centre
89. Kirsten Alderson, CEO, Suffolk Family Carers
90. Rachael MacLeod, Chief Executive, Sutton Carers Centre
91. Ifor Glyn, Chief Executive Officer, Swansea Carers Centre
92. Pippa Sargent, CEO, The Brain Society
93. Wendy Burt, CEO, The Essex Carers Network
94. Jacqueline Cannon, CEO, The Lewy Body Society
95. Russell Fleming, Head of Project Development, The ME Association
96. Georgina Carr, Chief Executive, The Neurological Alliance
97. Tam Gilbert, CEO, The Positivitree
98. Alison Wood, Business Manager, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers in Hampshire
99. Anna Rees, Wales Fund Manager, The Waterloo Foundation
100. Thomas Lawson, CEO, Turn2us
101. Mike O'Brien, Co-founder and Trustee, VOICES ADFOCAD
102. Ana Palazon, Chair, Wales Neurological Alliance
103. Katy Styles, Founder / carer, We Care Campaign
104. Andy Hood, Head of Carers Services, Westbank Community Health & Care
105. Sarah Pugh, Chief Executive, Whizz Kidz
106. Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson, Director, Women's Budget Group
107. Jane van Zyl, Chief Executive, Working Families
108. Sharron Smith, CEO, York Carers Centre
109. Áine Magee, Public Affairs and Media Manager, Carers NI
110. Fran Heathcote, General Secretary, Public and Commercial Services Union

ⁱ According to DWP statistics, there were 134,800 Carer's Allowance overpayments in May 2024 (<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25730/>) and 143,922 in February 2025 (<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-02-11/30627/>).

ⁱⁱ National Audit Office report, December 2024. <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/carers-allowance-1.pdf>