



Department
of Health &
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From Helen Whately MP
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The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
By email to: george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk

18 December 2020

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 3 November to Matt Hancock on behalf of a number of your constituents about support for carers during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

I understand your constituents' concerns. Carers are the unsung heroes of this pandemic, particularly the millions of unpaid carers such as your constituents who, day in and day out, have been caring for loved ones in the most difficult of circumstances.

The Government has launched a COVID-19 'hub', which can be found at www.gov.uk/coronavirus. Detailed guidance for those who provide unpaid care to friends or family can be found by searching for 'providing unpaid care'. We have also provided funding to extend Carers UK's helpline, information and advice services.

We recognise unpaid carers have particular needs and that these are not always properly understood. We have made unpaid carers a priority group for COVID-19 testing, and we are asking local commissioners and providers to provide letters enabling unpaid carers to identify themselves and their needs in day-to-day life.

We have focused on ensuring carers do not inadvertently stop receiving Carer's Allowance because of changes to patterns of care during the current situation. This includes allowing emotional support to count towards the 35 hours of care being provided by the carer, as well as relaxing the rules around breaks in care. The rate of Carer's Allowance was also increased in early April.

We published *COVID-19: our action plan for adult social care* on 15 April. Our number one priority for adult social care is for everyone who relies on care to get the care they need throughout the pandemic. The plan can be found at www.gov.uk by searching for its title.

HELEN WHATELY