Baroness Pitkeathley  
House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 0PW  

Dear Sir,  

In the House of Lords on Monday you asked the following Oral Question: To ask Her Majesty’s Government whether they have made any recent assessment of the financial contribution of unpaid carers to the national economy. As part of your supplementary question you said:

“My Lords, I put this Question down because of a response I had from the noble Lord, Lord Freud, on 10 November, when I asked him a Question about carers and the bedroom tax. In a reply which I think shocked the whole House, he implied that carers were not taking part in the economic life of this country, so I am glad to have an acknowledgement from the noble Baroness that the Government recognise that. I remind her of the sum that it is estimated that carers contribute, which is £119 billion”.

I would like to make it absolutely clear that in my answer on 10 November, I was not implying that carers were not taking part in the economic life of the country and I was disappointed to hear you suggest otherwise. As the record in Hansard makes clear, I was making reference to the proportion of workless households in the Social Rented Sector and how this has reduced over this Parliament. I would like to refer you to what I actually said in my answer, copied below.

“We have aimed to get rid of some of the areas where people are just not taking part in the economic life of the country. One of the things that has been happening is that the proportion of people who have been outside the labour market and in social housing has dropped dramatically from a peak of 49% at the beginning of this Parliament to 41% now—the lowest-ever level. We need to look to help all people that we possibly can to take a full part in the economic life of this country”.

I was also clear in an answer I gave some moments before that the Government ‘clearly value(s) carers greatly’. I would invite the noble lady to apologise and to correct the record.
I am copying this letter to all of the Peers who spoke as part of Monday's Oral Question on carers, as I would not wish noble lords to be mislead, even inadvertently, as to what I said as the official record makes clear.

I will place a copy of this letter in the House Library

Yours sincerely

David

Lord Freud

Minister for Welfare Reform