Written evidence submitted by Carers UK (CSR0078)

Summary

1. Carers UK is a membership charity of carers – we work to represent and support the 6.5 million people in the UK who provide unpaid care for ill, frail or disabled friends or family members.

2. The UK’s health and care system is heavily dependent on the support provided by families worth a staggering £132 billion a year\(^1\). Carers UK however remain deeply concerned that the measures announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review do not sufficiently address the chronic underfunding of the social care system.

3. The key funding announcements, of a Social Care Precept and extra investment to the Better Care Fund, provide long awaited recognition that our care system is now in crisis. However, this money clearly falls far short what is needed to address this crisis, with independent analysis demonstrating the gap in funding is expected to reach between £2.8 billion and £3.5 billion by the end of this Parliament.\(^2\)

4. The rationing of support from local authorities due to underfunding is putting increasing and unsustainable pressure on families to step in and provide care. Carers UK research demonstrates more people are caring than ever before, for more hours than ever before. Since 2001 those providing 50 hours of care or more a week has increased by a third.\(^3\) This increase in the provision of round-the-clock care comes at a high cost to carers’ own health, wellbeing and finances, and ultimately their ability to continue provide care.

5. Carers UK recommend the Committee:
   a. Continue to monitor the impact of the spending review on health and social care over the next year, with particular emphasis on the impact on unpaid carers
   b. Examine how the continued underfunding of social care system will affect the ability of local authorities to fully implement the Care Act

\(^1\) Carers UK (2015) Valuing Carers 2015
\(^3\) Carers UK (2015) Valuing Carers 2015
Comments on specific proposals

Social Care precept and the Better Care Fund

6. As part of the CSR the Government detailed plans to increase spending on social care by £3.5bn through the introduction of a social care precept and extra investment in the Better Care Fund. The Government argues that by giving local authorities the flexibility to raise council tax in their area by up to 2% for social care spending, up to £2bn can be raised towards the social care budget by 2019. In addition, the Government will increase funding to the Better Care Fund (BCF) from 2017, with an additional £1.5 billion invested in the BCF by 2019/20.

7. While the additional funding for social care is both welcome and essential, Carers UK has a number of key concerns:

- **Sufficiency of investment.** Research from the Nuffield Trust, The Health Foundation and the Kings Fund demonstrates even if every council were to utilise the precept, the estimated funding gap, taking into account the impact of the Living Wage, will be between £2.8 billion and £3.5 billion in 2019/20\(^4\). This significant underfunding will inevitably result in a loss of independence and quality of life for older and disabled people, and reductions in carer support that threaten to undermine the positive changes for carers introduced in the Care Act 2014.

- **Regional variation.** While the Government have said the additional funding from the BCF will be used to ‘top up’ funding for local authorities that will raise less from the social care precept, this extra funding will not be released 2017/18 when it will deliver only £105 million\(^5\). The ‘back loading’ of this money has the potential to create a ‘postcode lottery’ of support and is particularly concerning given the immediate investment needed to simply maintain current levels of provision.

- **Local government budgets.** In the context of unprecedented reductions in local Government budgets, Carers UK is concerned that, while money raised through the precept is ring-fenced, future local authority funding currently allocated to social care may be reduced in the knowledge that additional funding will be raised through the precept. It is vital that the Government introduces a mechanism to ensure the precept increases local authority social care budgets.

 Disabled facilities grant

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8. Carers UK welcome the investment of £500 million by 2019-20 for the Disabled Facilities Grant. The home adaptations provided by the Grant are vital to helping disabled people and their carers remain in their own homes, maintain independence and dignity. Such measures reduce overall pressure on the social care budget as well as often helping to reduce the physical impact of caring.

**Impact of social care underfunding**

**More families caring round the clock**

9. Social care services have failed to keep pace with the increasing demands of an ageing population. Analysis by Carers UK demonstrates that between 2010-11 and 2013-14, less homecare support was provided by local authorities to people with care needs in England, with number of people being supported dropping by 13%\(^6\).

10. This is in the context of an increasing number of people in need of support. Between 2001 and 2015, the number of people aged 85 and over increased by over 366,200 (+38%) and the number of people with a limiting long-term illness increased by 1.4 million.

11. This drop in support in the context of increasing need is having a profound impact on families who are stepping in to provide more care than ever before. In the UK, the provision of unpaid care has increased at a faster pace than population growth. Since 2001, the number of people providing 20-49 hours of care a week has increased by 43%, with those caring for fifty or more hours per week increasing by a third\(^7\).

**Impact on carers physical and mental health**

12. The increase in the numbers of people providing care, and the increased hours of care provided, is coming at a huge personal cost to those who are not well supported. Insufficient support from health and social care services is leaving carers isolated, burnt-out and unable to look after their own health. Of carers responding to Carers UK State of 32% said that they or the person they care for have experienced a change in the amount of care and support services that they receive. Of those, 42% said the amount of care and support arranged by social services has been reduced and 13% said that the care or support service was closed and no replacement was offered\(^8\).

13. The consequences of carers’ health breaking down can be devastating. Carers UK has heard from carers who have collapsed and been admitted to hospital alongside the

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\(^6\) Carers UK (2015) Valuing Carers 2015
\(^7\) Carers UK (2015) Valuing Carers 2015
\(^8\) Carers UK (2015) State of Caring Report
person they cared for, or who have be forced to refuse essential medical treatment for
themselves because they cannot find replacement care to look after an older or disabled
loved one. According to the 2011 Census are twice as likely as non-carers to be in bad
health where they are providing 50 hours or more a week. 76% of carers responding to
Carers UK’s latest survey of over 4500 current carers say they are worried about the
impact their caring role will have on their health over the next year9.

14. A lack of care and support services and the consequent increase in the amount of
unpaid care being provided is also having a very damaging impact on the emotional
resilience and relationships of carers. Carers who have reached breaking point – where
they felt unable to continue with their caring role are twice as likely to say that they are
socially isolated because they are unable to leave the house and are also more likely to
have experienced depression as a result of caring10.

Impact on the sustainability of the NHS

15. Historically poor coordination between the NHS and social care and chronic
underfunding of social care will impact on the sustainability of the NHS and its ability to
adapt to the needs of an ageing society with complex long-term conditions. Continued
underfunding of the social care system will ultimately undermine the successful
implementation of the 5 Year Forward View and the integration of health and social care
services.

16. Analysis from the Kings Fund shows that nearly a third of delayed discharges are
cased by problems accessing social care services11 – an increase of 21 per cent in the
past year.

17. The very poor experience of some families during hospital discharge demonstrates the
need for improvement in coordination between the NHS and social care services.
Inadequate involvement and support for families caring for a loved one at home can lead
to unnecessary emergency hospital admissions. The problem is exacerbated when
hospitals discharge patients without adequate community support in place due to lack of
funding.

18. Evidence suggests consulting carers about discharge can impact rates of readmission. 8
in 10 of those who responded to Carers UK’s 2013 State of Caring Survey said that the
person they look after had been discharged from hospital in the last three years. Of
these, 26% said that their loved one had to go back into hospital within 1-2 months
because their health had deteriorated again12. This figure rises to 31% for respondents

10 Carers UK (2015) Alone and Caring
11 Kings Fund Quarterly Monitoring update 17, October 2015, Figures for Aug 2015
who were not consulted about the discharge of the person they look after, strongly suggesting that involving and consulting carers can help to prevent readmissions due to health deterioration. Carers UK has carried out research with carers to look at the use of emergency services over the past year with a view to preventing problems with winter pressures which will be published in early 2016.

**Impact on the economy**

19. On top of the personal impact of breakdown on carers and their families, underfunding of social care services presents risks for the wider economy. The availability, affordability, reliability and quality of replacement care services has a significant impact on carers ability to juggle work and caring responsibilities.

20. The evidence is that carers give up work to care. Polling carried out by YouGov on behalf of Carers UK suggests that over 2 million people have given up work at some point to care for loved ones and 3 million have reduced working hours$^{13}$. Of those carers we surveyed who had given up work or retired early to care the majority of carers replying to our survey (62%) said it was the stress of juggling everything that meant they gave up work but over a third (35%) said that the care services they needed to continue to work and care were not suitable or were too expensive$^{14}$.

21. There is evidence to show that the current impact of staff turnover, absenteeism and stress as a result of juggling work with caring is already having a huge impact on business, and is estimated to be costing UK businesses over £3.5 billion every year$^{15}$. Other analysis by Age UK shows that an estimated £5.3bn has been wiped from the economy in lost earnings due to people who’ve dropped out of the workforce to take on caring responsibilities for older or disabled loved ones$^{16}$.

25 January 2016

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15 Carers UK (2014) Care Leave, Impact on Business