

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

29 April 2022

Dear Mr Sunak

Higher energy costs due to disability and medical conditions

New research from charity Contact reveals families with disabled children, who rely on life-saving electrical equipment, expect to see their energy bills soar to more than £3,000 per year this month.

Contact's research *Out of Energy* based on responses from 5499 families in March 2022 found 85% of households with disabled children use more energy due to their child's condition. Essential equipment like ventilators, food pumps and hoists as well as more washing due to continence issues or more heating due to mobility issues all add up to higher than average energy bills. And for many it would be dangerous to cut back on usage.

Key findings of Contact's *Out of Energy* research include:

- In the last 12 months, UK households with disabled children have had average energy bills of £1909 per year - £600 more than the average household bill.
- During this winter 42% went without heating and 10% went without vital electric powered disability equipment because they were unaffordable to run.
- Families estimate they pay £74 per month to run disability aids and equipment, such as adjustable beds, ceiling track hoists, wheelchair chargers, feeding and suction pumps.
- From April, families with disabled children expect higher than average increases in their annual bills to more than £3,000 per year.



Now facing unprecedented rises in energy costs, thousands of families fear they will have to cut back on life saving equipment and heating. This could worsen their child's condition and put them at risk.

Across the disability sector we are extremely concerned that rising energy costs is pushing many households with disabled children and adults into unmanageable debt, adding unnecessary extra stress and making health conditions worse.

In response we are calling for:

- the £200 energy rebate announced in February, should be made a non-repayable grant for disabled households.
- Changes to the warm home discount scheme do not take account the impact of disability on energy costs. In light of Contact's research, we would like the government to look again at the scheme to ensure it helps more households who have higher than average bills due to disability.
- Disability benefits to be uprated in line with current inflation. Although they were uprated in April, this was based on September's inflation figures. Due to huge surge in inflation in recent months, families are actually getting a significant real terms cut in financial support.

The Disability Strategy indicates plans to set up an extra costs taskforce we think this provides a good mechanism to explore these and other measures around reducing energy costs for disabled children and adults.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further by arranging an opportunity for you or your team to meet with some families with disabled children. To arrange this, please contact Una Summerson on 07725000728 or una.summerson@contact.org.uk

We have also written to the Minister of State for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change about this.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Batten, Chief Executive Contact and Chair of the Disabled Children's Partnership

Andy Fletcher, Chief Executive, Together for Short Lives

Matt James, Wellchild

Imran Hussain, Action for Children

Richard Kramer, Chief Executive, Sense

James Taylor, Scope

Caroline Stevens, Chief Executive, National Autistic Society

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive, Ambitious about Autism

Dame Christine Lenehan, Council for Disabled Children

Dan Scorer, MENCAP



Cheryl Ward, Chief Executive- Family Fund
Dalton Leong, Chief Executive, The Children's Trust
Dr Toni Wolff, Chair, British Academy of Childhood Disability
Sarah Pugh, Chief Executive, Whizz-Kidz
Mrunal Sisodia and Tina Emery, The National Network of Parent Carers Forums
Nick Meade, Genetic Alliance UK
Catherine McLeod MBE, Chief Executive Dingley's Promise
Helen Walker, Chief Executive, Carers UK
Blanche Shackleton, Guide Dogs
Dr Julie Calveley, NAC
Louise Fish, Chief Executive, Tuberous Sclerosis Association
Mark Lee, Chief Executive, Together Trust
Dan McEvoy, Dorset Children's Foundation
Gen Dearman, CEO, Disability Challengers
Helen Hewitt, CEO, Chailey Heritage Foundation
Vivien Cooper OBE, CEO, The Challenging Behaviour Foundation
Samantha Barber, CEO, Gene People
Assunta Soldovieri, Sebastian's Action Trust
Linda Lascelles, Chief Executive Afasic
Verity Sowden , MOVE Europe
Amanda Mortensen, Chief Executive, Batten Disease Family Association
Debbie Holden, KEEN London
David Coe, CEO, AFK
Gill Gibb, CEO, Tree of Hope
Sarah Wight, Affinity Trust
Ryan Campbell CBE, Chief Executive Officer, Treloar's
Madeline Cassidy, CEP ,The Bobath Centre
Sue Millman, Chief Executive, Ataxia UK
Portia Thorman, Spinal Muscular Atrophy UK
Sherann Hillman MBE , Seashell Trust
Dan White, Disability Rights UK
George Baker, The Disability Union
Robert Adamek, CEO, Rett UK
Louise Beaton #MEAction UK
Parmi Dheensa FRSA , Include Me TOO
Elaine James , CEO, DABD
Michelle Kukielka, Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity
Geoff Fimister, Disability Benefits Consortium
Kate Steele, Shine
Tania Tirraoro and Renata Blower, Special Needs Jungle Ltd
Katie Ghose, Chief Executive, KIDS
Katherine Sparkes, CEO, Flamingo Chicks
Zillah Bingley, Chief Executive Rainbow Trust Children's Charity
Julia Modern, Inclusion London
Fenella Lloyd, Specialised Healthcare Alliance

