



Chancellor of the Exchequer  
1 Horse Guards Road  
Westminster  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

24 October 2022

Dear Chancellor,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I am writing to you as the Chief Executive Officer for **Young Lives vs Cancer, the UK's leading charity for children and young people with cancer**. We work tirelessly in partnership with the NHS and other third sector organisations to make sure young cancer patients and their families get the financial, emotional and physical support they need to tackle the challenges that come with a cancer diagnosis. Last year, we reached **over 23,000** young cancer patients and families across the UK and we gave grants totalling **over £1.2 million** to help young people and their families cope with the spiralling costs of cancer, but we know we can only do so much to help in the current crisis we find ourselves in.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022, in response to the "mini budget" it was announced that the Energy Price Guarantee Scheme would no longer be in place for two years, but that current support would now only last until April 2023, with a review by the Treasury to take place into support for energy bills beyond April 2023. This announcement has unsurprisingly made the increasingly difficult situation that many young cancer patients and their families face, due to the cost of living crisis, even more **unstable and uncertain**.

Children and young people with cancer and their families already experience significant additional costs due to their cancer diagnosis. On top of this, they are disproportionately impacted by the cost of living crisis, which is only exacerbated by current energy prices and the lack of support available now.

Between 2016 and 2019 through our Cancer Costs research, we learned that young cancer patients and their families spent an average of **£600 a month** in additional costs as a result of their cancer diagnosis and treatment. Now, accounting for the current inflation rate, families could be spending **£730 a month**. Through this research, 63% of parents told us they got into debt during their child's treatment - 57% said their **debt was over £2000**, and 17% said they had borrowed **over £5000**. We also found that 62% of parents said that their household energy bills increased during their child's treatment, with 46% saying they **struggled to pay their energy bills** during their child's treatment. The cost of living crisis and skyrocketing energy bills that our families are now facing has only made this situation worse, especially for the most vulnerable.

Children and young people with cancer often have to spend large periods of time at home as a result of treatment side effects and having a weakened immune system, both of which result in being more susceptible to the cold. This makes energy bills an extremely important issue for them as they **need to keep the heating on** to recover and keep well. With increases in energy prices, young cancer patients and their families could be forced to choose between heating and eating, or even simply be unable to afford to turn the heating on at all.

You, and the Government, must take this opportunity through reviewing the support for energy bills to ensure that there is a robust plan so that from April 2023, children and young people with cancer and

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their families receive **real support to help with their energy bills** - support that doesn't just stop already unmanageable costs rising further, but helps tackle these costs, and stops families facing additional debt or having to choose whether or not they can heat their home.

The "mini budget" also included measures which will impact public services, including reversal of the Health and Social Care Levy that was introduced under the previous government to generate income for the NHS and social care system. As you are aware, the NHS is experiencing workforce shortages, mounting backlogs and strained resources, ultimately impacting on the care that patients receive. We fear that without additional funding, or with cuts to our health service, the NHS may fail to meet the needs of patients, including young cancer patients. It is vital that the Government address the current challenges in the health and social care sector and provide the funding needed to deliver high quality care for all, and in the "ACBD" priorities ensure you **do not forget a critical "C" – cancer**.

To demonstrate the impact of the issues we have highlighted in this letter, we would like to share Rhonda's story with you:

*"I have an 8 year old child with a brain tumour. On top of this diagnosis and the challenges this brings, we are now being hit by the huge increases in energy costs; our monthly costs are now over 4 times higher than they were before this crisis and our gas bill alone is predicted to be over £5,000 for the next year. I need to keep the house warm to make sure my child stays as well as possible but I'm now turning radiators off because of the costs. So many families are in the same situation and struggling to cope. Your life is turned upside down when you hear you child has cancer, and we really need the Government to help us."*

We would welcome meeting with you to continue this conversation and discuss how the Government intends to support young cancer patients and their families during these challenging times, and how the Government and third sector can work together to ensure that the unique needs of children and young people with cancer are met. We would also be happy to facilitate a forum where the families we represent can discuss these issues directly with you.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best Wishes,



Rachel Kirby Rider  
Chief Executive Officer, Young Lives vs Cancer