

**Baroness Barran MBE**  
**Parliamentary Under Secretary for Civil Society**  
**Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport,**  
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**17<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

Dear Baroness Barran,

### **Impact of Covid-19 on Breast Cancer UK and the Charitable Sector**

As Chief Executive of Breast Cancer UK, I am writing to express my deep concern and disappointment regarding the limited nature of government support announced recently for the charity sector, following the outbreak of Covid-19.

Since the start of the pandemic, Breast Cancer UK has experienced a 78% downturn in our income. Should the lockdown remain in place there is every indication, given our limited financial reserves, that our charity will cease operating before the end of the financial year.

Based on our current data and that produced by the sector, we are forecasting an 85% drop in our income in Quarter 1 and a 70% overall fall in total income for the year. As we are entirely reliant on individual donations, grants and fundraising for income, this drastic decline will have a direct effect on the research programmes we fund, and also on our education and outreach work in the community to raise awareness of how to prevent breast cancer.

Breast Cancer UK, is one of the few cancer charities promoting the prevention of breast cancer by addressing the environmental and lifestyle causes of the disease<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, we are the only charity in the UK funding cutting edge research into the effects of hormone disrupting chemicals (found in everyday products and the environment) on breast cancer risk.

We do, of course, welcome the unprecedented measures the Government has already announced, including the £750 million support package for frontline charities working to combat Covid-19 and the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme<sup>2</sup>. However, these schemes will be of limited benefit to BCUK, as we do not meet the criteria for charities to be eligible for the support package. Indeed, the Job Retention scheme itself is not fit for purpose because furloughing our staff means that our vital work to prevent breast cancer will have to stop.

Our work is about saving lives, and for charities like Breast Cancer UK that provide essential services in support of vulnerable groups and communities, in the words of the Chancellor: "... shutting up shop would be to contravene their very purpose, their entire reason to exist ..."<sup>3</sup>.

Breast Cancer is the most prolific cancer in the UK – 55,000 women and 390 men are diagnosed with the disease every year<sup>4</sup>. Incidence rates have increased by 25% over the last 20 years and are projected to rise further. Yet an estimated 38% of cancer cases and at least 1 in 4 breast cancers is considered preventable. This is why our work is

<sup>1</sup> Breast Cancer UK (2020) 'About us' available at: <https://www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/about-us/> (Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020)

<sup>2</sup> HM Treasury (2020) 'Chancellor sets out extra £750 million coronavirus funding for frontline charities' available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-sets-out-extra-750-million-coronavirus-funding-for-frontline-charities> (Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020)

<sup>3</sup> HM Treasury (2020) 'Speech: Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak on economy support for the charity sector' available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-of-the-exchequer-rishi-sunak-on-economic-support-for-the-charity-sector> (Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020)

<sup>4</sup> Cancer Research UK (2020) 'Breast cancer statistics' available at: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/breast-cancer> (Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020)

critically important, potentially saving over 13,000 lives a year, avoiding unnecessary suffering and reducing the cost to the NHS by an estimated £1.5 billion a year<sup>5</sup>.

Following the introduction of social distancing measures to combat Covid-19, income for the charitable sector virtually dried up overnight. Indeed, the NCVO is forecasting that charities will lose over £4.3 billion of income over the next 12 weeks<sup>6</sup> and a recent survey by the Institute of Fundraising showed charities reporting a projected loss of 48% of their voluntary income<sup>7</sup>.

We join with Charities and Parliamentarians<sup>8</sup> to urge the Government to go further and establish a £4 billion emergency stabilisation package to help charities stay afloat, pay staff and continue to operate<sup>9</sup>. This figure is a conservative forecast based on the best available data about the income charities will lose over the next three months. We seek confirmation that small and medium sized charities will be made eligible for the small business interruption scheme. Finally, and most importantly, we call on the Government to introduce a separate furlough scheme for charities that will enable us to continue our work to prevent breast cancer.

In summary, we would welcome any reassurances you can provide on these matters. We would also ask for an urgent response on how the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and HM Treasury intend to remedy the wider financial impact of Covid-19 on our charity and the charitable sector.

For Breast Cancer UK, our prevention work is focused on saving lives and just like the Government's vital work to combat Covid-19, everyday counts.

We look forward to receiving your urgent response.

Yours sincerely,



Thalie Martini  
Chief Executive

<sup>5</sup> Laudicella, M. et al (2016) 'Cost of care for cancer patients in England: evidence from population-based patient-level data' available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4891510/> (Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020)

<sup>6</sup> NCVO (2020) 'Every day counts' as Charities still wait for government support' available at: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/2748-every-day-counts-as-charities-still-wait-for-government-support> (Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020)

<sup>7</sup> Institute of Fundraising (2020) 'Coronavirus Impact Survey Results: Charities cannot meet the surge in demand for services without urgent funding from the Government' available at: <https://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/news/coronavirus-impact-survey-results-charities-cannot-meet-the/> (Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020)

<sup>8</sup> Yorke, H (2020) 'Thousands of charities 'teetering on the brink' and must receive Treasury rescue package, Rishi Sunak warned' The Telegraph, available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2020/03/26/thousands-charities-teetering-brink-must-receive-treasury-rescue/> (Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020)

<sup>9</sup> Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee (2020) 'Oral Evidence Session: Impact of Covid-19 on the charity sector' available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/243/impact-of-covid19-on-the-charity-sector/publications/> (Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020)