

Written Evidence submitted by Breast Cancer UK

**To the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee inquiry on the impact of Covid-19 on the
Charity Sector**

Executive Summary

1. Breast Cancer UK works to promote the prevention of breast cancer by addressing the environmental and lifestyle causes of the disease. Breast cancer is the most prolific cancer in the UK, and we are extremely concerned about the lack of government support for our prevention work and that of the wider charitable sector.
2. Breast Cancer UK supports calls for a £4 billion Stabilisation Fund for the charity sector and for confirmation that charities should be eligible for the Small Business Interruption Loan scheme. We also contend that the Job Retention Scheme is not fit for purpose for charities. Our work is for the public good and saves lives, and so we call for an exemption from its eligibility criteria so that our employees can keep working while receiving the government's furlough subsidy.
3. Breast Cancer UK's funding relies entirely on individual donations, grants and fundraising and we have already experienced a 78% downturn in our income due to the impact of Covid-19. This serious funding disruption represents a very real threat to Breast Cancer UK's existence.
4. Breast Cancer UK alongside many charities is not in a position to benefit from the Government's recently announced financial support package for the charity sector as we fall outside the government's definition of essential services.

About Breast Cancer UK

5. Breast Cancer UK is a registered charity whose mission is to prevent breast cancer through scientific research, education and policy change¹. We educate and raise awareness of the preventable risk factors for breast cancer and provide practical information to help people reduce their risk. We campaign for policies that support prevention and fund vital scientific research to better understand and address preventable risk factors.
6. Breast Cancer is the most prolific cancer in the UK – Over 55,000 women and 390 men are diagnosed with breast cancer every year and countless more are affected by the disease². Breast cancer incidence rates have increased by 25% over the last 20 years and are predicted to rise further. Yet, an estimated 38% of cancer cases and 1 in 4 breast cases is considered preventable. This is why our work is critically important saving over 13,000 lives a year, avoiding unnecessary suffering and reducing the cost of breast cancer to the NHS by an estimated £1.5 billion a year³.

Calls on the UK Government

7. Breast Cancer UK has joined with other charities and Parliamentarians to urge the Government to introduce the following measures to address the impact of Covid-19 on the sector:

¹ Breast Cancer UK (2020) 'About us' available at: <https://www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/about-us/> (Accessed: 15th April 2020)

² Cancer Research UK (2020) 'Breast cancer statistics' available at: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/breast-cancer> (Accessed: 15th April 2020)

³ 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: 15th April 2020)

- a) Create a £4 billion 'Stabilisation fund' to help charities stay afloat, pay staff and continue to operate⁴. This figure is a conservative forecast based on the best available data about the income charities will lose over the next three months.
- b) Confirm that the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan scheme will be made eligible for all charities, not just those that receive over 50% of their income from trading.
- c) Recognise that the Job Retention Scheme is not fit for purpose for most charities and introduce a separate furlough scheme for charities that will allow them to continue their essential work for the public good.

The impact of Covid-19 on Breast Cancer UK, and the charity sector

8. Breast Cancer UK receives no statutory or government funding and relies entirely on the generosity of the public. We are one of few charities promoting the prevention of breast cancer by addressing the environmental and lifestyle causes of the disease. We are the only UK charity funding cutting edge research into the effects of hormone disrupting chemicals (found in everyday products and the environment) on breast cancer risk.
9. We are forecasting a major impact on individual donations with an 85% drop in income for Quarter 1 and a 70% overall fall in total income this financial year. We receive most of our income from community fundraising and 50% of this income is generated from fundraising events which are now unable to take place, due to social distancing. This drastic decline is having a significant effect on the research programmes we fund, and also on our community outreach work to raise awareness of how to prevent breast cancer.
10. Our education programme is currently on hold. This program raises awareness of the preventable risk factors for breast cancer by providing accurate, peer reviewed, trustworthy, up to date information informed by our scientific research, to improve knowledge and help individuals to reduce their risk. We are working alongside our team of ambassadors to create digital channels that will enable us to reach out to individuals and communities during this period. We aim to reach 21,000 people over the next three years, however, without financial support, this work is at risk.
11. Our research is of global importance, leading to changes in policy and practices, with implications beyond the field of breast cancer. We work with leading scientists to understand the environmental and chemical causes of breast cancer. Current projects we are funding include investigating the links between bisphenol alternatives and breast cancer risk, the presence of UV filters in breast tissue and the role of nuclear receptors in breast cancer⁵. Since the launch of our funding programme in 2015, we have allocated grants to the value of £270,000 to support independent scientific research. Our ability to plan and fund future research projects in this area is now under threat.
12. Breast Cancer UK campaigning work has also been severely disrupted as our efforts are now focused on responding to the virus. In recent months, we have campaigned both at a UK and EU level to reduce public exposure to harmful chemicals, bring prevention into the mainstream policy agenda of the NHS and ensure public health and environmental standards are maintained post-Brexit.
13. Overall, since the start of the pandemic, Breast Cancer UK has experienced a 78% downturn in income which is undermining our work to prevent breast cancer. Should the restrictions remain in place for a prolonged period there is every indication, given our limited financial reserves, that our charity will

⁴ 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: 15th April 2020)

⁵ Breast Cancer UK (2020) 'Our Research' available at: <https://www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/science/current-research/> (Accessed: 15th April 2020)

cease operating before the end of the financial year. For Breast Cancer UK, our prevention work is focused on saving lives and like the Government's vital work to combat Covid-19, everyday counts!

14. Following the introduction of social distancing measures, income for the charitable sector virtually dried up overnight. The National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) is forecasting that charities will lose £4.3 billion of income over the next 12 Weeks⁶. A recent survey by the Institute of Fundraising showed charities reporting a projected loss of 48% of their voluntary income⁷.
15. According to a survey by the Directory of Social Change⁸, half of charities are facing financial difficulties, just 7% of charities surveyed qualified for the Business interruption loan scheme and over half of charity respondents said they will collapse within six months without immediate financial support. Typically, charities hold three to six months expenditure in reserve. Accordingly, this serious funding disruption represents a very real threat to the existence of many charities including Breast Cancer UK.

Current Support from the UK Government

16. Following the outbreak of Covid-19, the Government has introduced an unprecedented array of measures to support employers which are welcome. However, these measures will not benefit Breast Cancer UK and the vast majority of UK charities.
17. On April 8th, the Chancellor announced a new £750 million support package for frontline charities working to combat Covid-19⁹. Breast Cancer UK and the vast majority of charities fall outside the government's definition of essential services and so the support is not available to us. Furthermore, this package falls well short of the £4 billion stabilisation fund the NCVO estimates is required to help charities stay afloat.
18. Breast Cancer UK is also not able to benefit from the Business Interruption Loan scheme announced by the Chancellor. The scheme is not applicable for most charities as they need to receive over 50% of their income from trading to be eligible.
19. The Coronavirus Job retention scheme is helpful to certain charities however, according to the NCVO¹⁰, only 1 in 3 charities will benefit from the scheme. The scheme is designed to support employers in the commercial world whose operations have been severely impacted. Whilst Breast Cancer UK alongside other charities is eligible for the scheme, it is not fit for purpose because it requires our work in preventing breast cancer to stop.

⁶ 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: 15th April 2020)

⁷ 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: 15th April 2020)

⁸ Directory of Social Change (2020) 'Over half of charities could disappear within 6 months' available at: <https://www.dsc.org.uk/content/over-half-of-charities-could-disappear-within-6-months/> (Accessed: 15th April 2020)

⁹ 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: 15th April 2020)

¹⁰ Whitehead, H. (2020) 'It is frustrating that charities are not seen as part of the solution,' NCVO boss tells MPs available at: <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/charities-are-part-of-the-solution-to-covid-19-but-seen-as-a-problem-government-hears.html> (Accessed: 15th April 2020)

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20. 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 ..." ¹¹.

***For more information please contact Kit Bowerin, Public Affairs Officer Breast Cancer UK at:
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¹¹ 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: 15th April 2020)