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Cost of Living and the Carer's Allowance:

I welcome that most benefits, including Carer's Allowance, will be uprated by 6.7% in April 2024. However, as I am sure constituents will know, the Chancellor did not raise the earnings limit for Carer's Allowance in this year's Spring Budget beyond the small increase preannounced in November 2022. Nor have Ministers given any indication that they plan to amend the rules stipulating that a claim can only be made for one person per carer.

I recognise that this will be disappointing to many constituents and I hope the Government will reflect on the points made as it determines the rate of benefits such as Carer's Allowance for the next financial year.

I am also concerned that the Government has declined to provide any details about whether the Household Support Fund and Cost of Living Payments will continue for the financial year 2024/25. I recognise that the lack of certainty about this will disappoint many constituents and I hope that Ministers will provide clarity about the future of these programmes on which so many carers and their families have relied.

In my view, we also need to reform social care so that families can get the support they need to look after sick and disabled relatives. This would better enable carers to work if they are able to. I want to see a world-class National Care Service that makes people as proud as the NHS does: improving quality and standards and transforming access to make sure everyone who needs care and support can get it when and where they need it. I believe this must start with improving standards in the current system, delivering better pay, terms and conditions for care workers, and supporting unpaid carers. It also means establishing stronger national standards to reduce inequalities in access to care, and enforcing high standards across the private sector to ensure care homes are run in a financially sustainable way. I am therefore concerned that the Government has no meaningful action plan to reform social care.

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