

CLIC Sargent

CLIC Sargent is the UK's leading cancer charity for children and young people. When cancer strikes young lives CLIC Sargent helps families limit the damage cancer causes beyond their health, providing nurses, social workers, financial grants and a place to stay during treatment in our Homes from Home next to hospitals. We fight tirelessly for young cancer patients – we're there giving emotional, financial and practical support. Last year we reached over 23,000 young cancer patients and their families across the UK, and grants totaling over £1.2 million were given to help young cancer patients and their families cope with the costs of cancer.

We welcome the opportunity to feed into the Public Accounts Committee Inquiry: 'Covid-19: Government support for charities'.

Government support for charities

CLIC Sargent welcomed the Chancellor's announcement of a support package for charities in April 2020. Due to the specific mention of vulnerable children and those with disabilities (two characteristics met by those we support) we believed CLIC Sargent would qualify to access this funding.

However, following this announcement we were concerned at the lack of information and speed with which funds were allocated. CLIC Sargent was able to gain information that a central £360m of funding was to be allocated by Government departments with bids made to DCMS by 17th April. This information or any application process by which to access funding was not made public and we were therefore unable to apply. On the 22nd May, the [Department of Health and Social Care](#) announced which charities had been allocated their portion of funding. We were incredibly concerned at the lack of transparency around the allocation of this funding. This lack of transparency and being unable to access any vital and much needed funds left us concerned that if CLIC Sargent wasn't around to support children and young people with cancer, who would be?

The guidance for the remaining funding was published on 20th May, around a month and a half after the initial announcement. We were unsuccessful in any bids we made for the remaining funds, such as applications for the Loneliness Fund to tackle the isolation felt by young people with cancer. Being unable to receive any portion of funding was incredibly challenging for charities like CLIC Sargent who are supporting NHS colleagues on the frontline and supporting vulnerable children and young people with cancer and their families. Meanwhile we were hearing from our clinical colleagues in the NHS about how they were reliant on us to keep our services going.

We launched a campaign calling for Government to provide £750,000 in funding to ensure we could continue to provide social care support for around 1,200 individuals or families at any one time for six months, during a time of uncertainty across all sectors, but particularly the third sector. This garnered support from a range of stakeholders, including our NHS colleagues - 27 healthcare professionals

from Principal Treatment Centres across the UK, over 4,000 young cancer patients and members of their families and 34 MPs all signed separate open letters calling on the Government to provide CLIC Sargent with funding. This was also unsuccessful.

What changes did have CLIC Sargent make due to fall in income?

As a result of the pandemic CLIC Sargent experienced a £9m loss in income. We rely entirely on public donations and do not receive any Government or NHS funding. Much of our fundraised income comes through face-to-face events which have all been cancelled. A drop in donations was coupled with a 43% increase in the need for our services in the time period of March-October 2020, compared to the same period in 2019.

Our social workers were unable to provide face-to-face support in the hospitals and required new equipment in order for them to work remotely. Our Homes from Home, which provide much needed accommodation near hospitals, needed to operate a reduced capacity with only one parent allowed in the home, no siblings, as well as introducing social distancing measures. This also required new covid safe rigorous cleaning regimes as well as limiting the use of communal spaces.

Where appropriate, CLIC Sargent made use of the Government furlough scheme, but this was not an option for the many of our staff providing support services to children, young people and their families – we needed to continue being there for them, even as income plummeted but demand for our services increased. Ultimately, we unfortunately did furlough 32% of staff, and reduced the hours of 36% of staff to help cut costs. As an organisation we have drawn on £2.2m of our reserves and our leadership team took a voluntary pay cut of 20%.

CLIC Sargent has been through two rounds of redundancies since the pandemic began. In July 2020 38 members of staff were made redundant and in September a further 30-35 members were also made redundant. This equates to around 15% reduction in staffing levels.

CLIC Sargent would have welcomed an open dialogue with the Department of Health as well as an opportunity to bid for a portion of the £22m to be allocated by the department for Health and Social Care. We at CLIC Sargent are as committed as ever to ensuring that we provide continued support for children and young people with cancer, however we continue to feel the financial pressure of the pandemic. We are calling on the government to explain how the allocation process took place as we wish to understand their decisions on charity funding during the pandemic.

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