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Chief Executive  
The Sandhu Charitable Foundation  
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2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

Dear Mr Sandhu,

Once again, thank you so much for your donation of £12,500 in April 2020. With the support of the trustees of **The Sandhu Charitable Foundation**, we have helped make life better for carers, and the lives of the loved ones they care for, across the UK including Scotland, especially during this coronavirus crisis.

This past year has been a difficult one for us all. The pandemic brought – and continues to present – challenges to everyday life for everyone in ways no one could have predicted or could have prepared for. This meant we had to adapt our way of working, so that we could realise our Vision for 2021, and beyond, and continue supporting carers. During 2020/21:

- We responded to over 30,335 enquiries on caring (over 42% increase to the previous year), including over 2,000 enquiries from carers in Scotland.
- Our website's Help & Advice pages had 2.85 million pageviews from people seeking further information on providing unpaid care and the support available to them, including over 234,400 pageviews from people across Scotland.
  - Carers Scotland's website has also had over 110,400 pageviews from people across Scotland seeking further information on caring.
- We recruited 216 new volunteers to help us reach carers online and by phone.
  - We have hosted over 100 online *Care for a Cuppa* and *Share & Learn* sessions, engaging with and connecting over 1,200 attendees.
- We published two editions of our *Caring behind closed doors*, report: one in April and the other six months on in October, to examine how the ongoing pandemic continues to affect unpaid carers across the UK. Both reports drew over 5,000 respondents.
  - In our report, '*Unseen and undervalued*', we also found that the value of unpaid care provided across the UK during the pandemic is estimated to be £135 billion since the initial outbreak in March (£530 million every day)!

Please find enclosed a copy of our '*Caring behind closed doors*' report. Published in October, we examined how the ongoing pandemic continues to affect unpaid carers across the UK. If you require further information about our work, please do let me know.

With many thanks again for your support.

Yours sincerely,



Vincent Mok

**Trust & Foundations Officer**

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## Thank you for your support

### A report to The Sandhu Charitable Foundation

The COVID-19 pandemic has and continues to challenge our way of working, and has exacerbated many of the problems carers have been facing for years. 2020 has undoubtedly been a difficult year for us all, but it has also shone a light on many of the stories, problems and issues on caring we have been highlighting. With support from **The Sandhu Charitable Foundation**, we were able to react to what has been a rapidly changing landscape and be there for carers across the UK including Scotland.

#### What have we been doing?

Our staff have been working from home since March 2020, meaning we had to move all of our face-to-face activities online. Whilst challenging, this was an opportunity to trial new ways of reaching carers.

*“Being a carer takes up your whole day; I’m lucky that I have my husband to help, because being a carer can be exhausting. There are times when it takes a toll on your mental health … [Peggy’s condition] has gone rapidly downhill since the start of the restrictions … My husband encouraged me to attend [Carers UK’s Care for a Cuppa] session back in May last year, and now I go as often as I can. The sessions make you feel less isolated, because you meet other people who are going through similar struggles.” – Pam (left) has been caring for her mother-in-law, Peggy (right), who is 98 and has dementia, since 2008.*



#### Helpline

During 2020/21, we responded to 30,335 enquiries on caring (a 42% increase on 2019/20) including over 2,000 enquiries in Scotland. Call volumes to our Helpline also rose by over 176% compared to 2019/20. Due to the enormous increase in demand for our support, and securing some additional funding, in March 2020, we extended our opening hours from two days per week to five (an overall increase of 33 hours per week – until April 2021). This helped us respond to more enquiries. Similarly, with e-mails, our response times were stretched from within 48 hours to, at one point, 10 days. We resolved this issue by recruiting more freelance support staff to respond to carers’ enquiries.

#### Information resources

Last year, our website’s Help and Advice pages had over 2.85 million pageviews from people seeking information on caring issues and the support available to them, including over 234,400 pageviews from people across Scotland. Carers Scotland’s website has also had over 110,400 pageviews from people seeking further information on caring. As government guidance and the overall situation changed regularly, it was challenging for us to keep updating our website’s central COVID-19 page. We continue to do so frequently, covering topics, such as: emergency planning, protecting your mental wellbeing, vaccinations, changes to financial support and other FAQs.

#### Network of volunteers & members

Over this past year, 7,555 people joined our movement and membership. We now have over 36,400 individual members and over 780 volunteers across the UK, of which 2,300 and 100 are from Scotland, respectively. Because of the current restrictions, many of our in-person volunteering activities are on hold, such as hosting information stalls in public venues. This gave us the opportunity to trial new online activities. We have hosted over 100 online sessions, engaging over 1,200 attendees, to connect carers with one another for some much-needed respite (*Care for a Cuppa*) and the opportunity to learn new recreational skills and activities, such as yoga, photography and singing (*Share & Learn*).

## What else have we been up to?

**Priority vaccinations for carers** – Initially excluded from the top priority groups for COVID-19 vaccinations, we successfully campaigned for unpaid carers to be included in the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) priority list 6, in December 2020. This group now includes “*Other groups at higher risk, including those who are in receipt of a carer’s allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill*”.

**Carers Week** – Co-ordinated and led by Carers UK, every year we work with our partners to raise awareness of caring issues, highlight the challenges unpaid carers face and recognise the contributions they make to our families and communities. Last year (8<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> June), due to the pandemic, 574 awareness raising activities were held online and registered as part of Carers Week. These included: webinars on caring at workplaces, coffee mornings and virtual get-togethers.

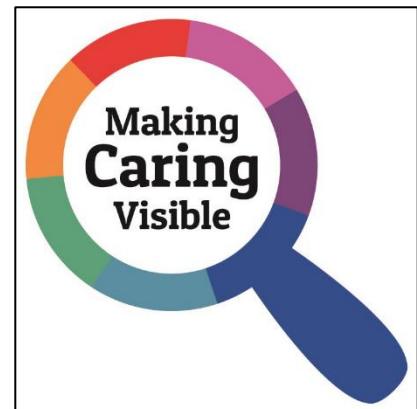
**Employers for Carers (EfC)** – Many people have been working from home over this past year whilst also caring for a loved one, without seeing themselves as ‘carers’. We are currently working with over 250 organisations across the private, public and voluntary sectors, enabling us to reach over 3.5 million employees across the UK, to support people who have unpaid caring responsibilities. This includes help setting up flexible working practices and workplace champions.

- Over 190 organisations have also signed up to Carers Scotland’s **Carer Positive** scheme, reaching over 437,000 employees, to support employees who have unpaid caring responsibilities across Scotland.

**Members’ Conference** – In October 2020, we held our first ever online annual gathering of individual members. This enabled carers who were unable to attend in the past, for travel and caring reasons, to join us, and in some cases, for the first time. This led to our members’ conference’s highest ever attendance with 250 people. We shared the findings of our Caring behind closed doors reports, members’ caring experiences during the pandemic and the outlines of our next strategy, Vision 2025.

- Carers Scotland’s first ever virtual **Carers Parliament** took place on 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> November. We brought carers and representatives from across the voluntary and social care sectors to discuss caring issues in Scotland, to recognise carers’ contributions and the importance of carers’ wellbeing. This included workshops, webinars, virtual information stalls.

*“Caring is not something you can plan for. Caring is something you just have to take on board and deal with as it comes. Truthfully, it was tough ... It was at a time of sheer desperation that I came across [Carers UK] ... I made one phone call and straightaway got the information [and support] I needed ... [we] do worry about the future. But I feel today [that we matter] ... It is a great comfort to know there is an organisation there to help you when you need it.” – Jocelyn (right), has been caring for her daughter, Amy, who has trichodystrophy, and for her husband, Darran, a double amputee, for over 30 years.*



To help recognise the contributions all carers make to our families and communities, before and especially during the pandemic, the theme to last year’s Carers Week was ‘*Making caring visible*’.



## What we have learnt

Having trialled our *Care for a Cuppa* and *Share & Learn* sessions by Zoom, we received positive and constructive feedback from carers, indicating a need and wish for this to continue, such as:

- *"It's so nice to be able to connect with other carers and not have to travel anywhere or arrange respite ... from the comfort of your own home."*
- *"It was nice to see other people in the same boat. Caring can sometimes feel a bit lonely and when you are trying to juggle with working and family it can be exhausting."*
- *"Really enjoyed that session. Not really done Yoga before. I did struggle with my left hip sitting on the floor. Clearly, I need to do more work stretching my hip!"*

In September 2020, we had planned to launch our Listening Support Service, to help provide carers with further emotional support and the opportunity to voice their anxieties and concerns about their caring situation. Because we have had to prioritise responding to enquiries and updating our website's central COVID-19 page, this will not begin until 2021/22. This service is, however, available with our colleagues in Carers Wales.

Our new website will also launch this year. This will help us provide carers with the information they need more clearly, including how the aftermath of the pandemic will affect them. We will also better illustrate carers' stories to reflect the different caring journeys people have been on and how we can and have helped them. Doing so will help us reach wider audiences on caring issues.

## Looking ahead – Our Vision for 2025

As our current strategy, Vision 2021, comes to an end, we have begun looking ahead to our Vision for 2025, which will coincide with our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We are currently speaking with various stakeholders, partners and our membership to develop this new strategy.

We acknowledge there will always be challenges in the future we cannot foresee or anticipate. However, the pandemic has taught us the importance of flexibility and adaptability. For the issues we can prepare for today, we will continue to fight for better rights and support for carers, continue helping those providing unpaid care self-recognise as 'carers' and campaign for unpaid carers to be listed as a protected characteristic, to name but a few.

Once again, thank you so much for your support. We have always known that carers are selfless and resilient people – prioritising the needs of the loved one they care for ahead of their own. Throughout this pandemic, less support and fewer resources have been made available to carers, and yet, as illustrated in our Caring behind closed doors reports, they have been providing more care than ever before. Irrespective of what 2021/22 will bring, we will continue to work hard to make life better for carers across the UK. To do this, we will need continued support. If the trustees of **The Sandhu Charitable Foundation** would consider supporting our work once more and would like further information, please do contact me at [vincent.mok@carersuk.org](mailto:vincent.mok@carersuk.org).



As video calls have become the norm for us all, our virtual *Care for a Cuppa* sessions have helped keep our members engaged and connected throughout this crisis.



A big thank you from everyone at Carers UK!

**Thank you!**