Impact of COVID-19 on the charity sector

Submission to Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee by Sue Ryder, 1 April 2020

As a charity that supports people through the most difficult times of their lives, Sue Ryder is critical to the country's response to COVID-19. We provide compassionate and expert care to those with a terminal illness, dealing with the loss of a loved one or with complex neurological conditions – all of whom are feeling the impact of this outbreak very acutely.

Sue Ryder is crucial for the NHS support system. As a charity with over 1,000 doctors and nurses caring for people going through the most difficult times of their lives, we know that we are needed now more than ever. We need to keep our beds and services open, including our in-patient units and our Hospice at Home services to help the NHS cope with the pressure of COVID-19. Furthermore, we are willingly facilitating requests from our NHS partners to plan to care for additional patients in order to free up hospital beds as the virus spreads, as well as admitting and caring for patients with COVID-19.

However, Sue Ryder is experiencing a devastating impact as a result of the pandemic. Before COVID-19 hospice funding was insufficient, with hospices across the sector receiving on average only enough funding to cover one third of their costs. Sue Ryder was bridging that gap mainly via our fundraising efforts and our 450 high street shops. Now all our fundraising events for the next several months have been cancelled and our shops have ceased trading. We are currently calculating the exact value of government support for furloughed staff as a result of the impacts of COVID-19, but anticipate we will suffer a loss of around £12 million over the next three months.

We need access to emergency funding from the Government and ministers. We are working in partnership with other hospices to request a £200m emergency package for the next three months for the sector and believe the government recognises the vital role the hospice sector has to play during this unprecedented period.

Without immediate funding from the government, the much-needed and valued end of life care that Sue Ryder provides will cease. Not only would this be a crippling blow to our NHS’s response to COVID-19 but it would be a massive blow to the thousands of families that Sue Ryder supports each year across the UK.

Heidi Travis
Chief Executive Officer
Sue Ryder